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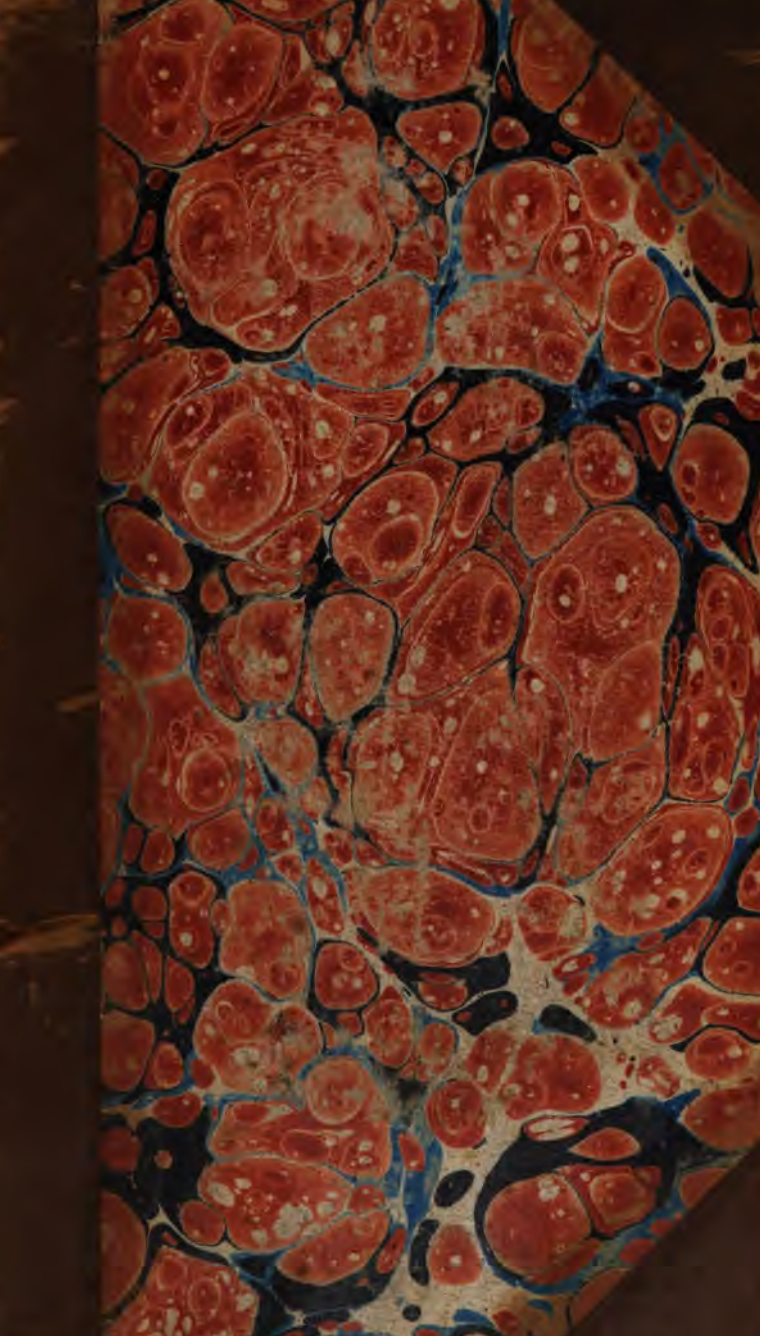
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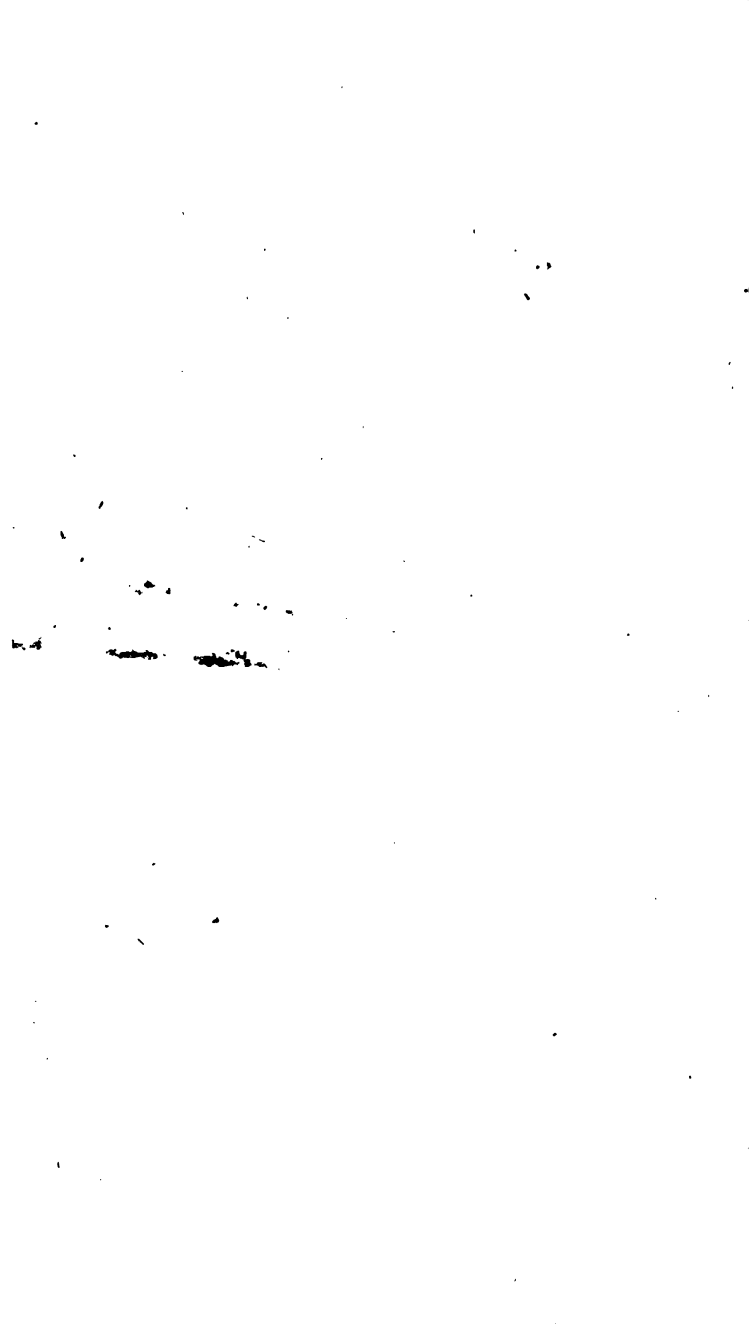




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J. H. 1826

DAVID,
KING OF ISRAEL:

SACRED POEM,

IN

Twelve Books.

BY CALEB FLETCHER.

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147.



P R E F A C E.

In presenting the following work to public notice, the Author is unwilling to omit offering some remarks by way of preface—not so much in conformity with custom, as for the satisfaction of the reader, and in justice to himself; for in most publications there are some peculiarities, either in their execution or in the views of the writer, with which it is desirable the reader should be acquainted, before he enters upon the perusal.

In reference to the subject, in a biographical point of view, it will, no doubt, be

admitted that it is a good one; exhibiting a greater abundance and variety than are usually met with in real characters:—and taken in a moral light, whilst that illustrious personage exemplified, in a remarkable manner, the depravity of the natural man, in him was also eminently displayed the wonderful efficacy of Divine grace. Thus, in a paraphrase on the life of David, opportunities are afforded of combining pleasure with moral and religious instruction. How far the author may have availed himself effectually of the means he possessed, he dares not presume to determine; but he has the satisfaction to believe, that he presents to the reader, nothing that can have a tendency to vitiate his character or his principles.

Perhaps some readers may be ready to query, whether it quite accords with the character of one much beyond the meridian

of life, to attempt a considerable composition of this kind ; such pursuits seeming to be more congenial with the fervour and vivacity of youth, than the sober period of advanced age. Such a sentiment, even should we admit its general correctness, does not fully apply in the present instance, since the work was written chiefly in early life, for the author's own amusement ; but it may be recollected that, for poetical composition on religious subjects, we have the sanction of very high authority—that of many of the prophets themselves, and their contemporary contributors to the sacred volume, many parts of whose writings exhibit beautiful specimens of their national poetry. This mode of communication has a powerful influence upon the finer sensibilities ; and thus, when employed on the side of virtue and religion, may become an useful instrument in engaging the heart.

To some descriptions of his readers, the Author is apprehensive it would have been more agreeable to meet with a greater display of inventive imagination; but the writer is a lover of truth, and not desirous of wandering into the labyrinths of fiction: for instead of indulging in such unlimited reveries, or making any allusion whatever to the wild theory of the heathen mythology, they have been carefully guarded against, as well as the use of hyperbolical expressions; yet so far as is generally understood to be admissible by the nature of a paraphrase, the freedom has been taken.

This work being on a religious subject, and one of universal interest, it is calculated in that respect for general reading; especially as all sectarian opinions are kept out of view, and no attempt is made either to espouse or invalidate any; the broad

principle of Scripture being only, and closely, kept to. Yet if any should apprehend that the sentiments exhibited on the subject of war, may in some measure border on an exception, let such be reminded, that these reflections do not constitute an exception at this day; when many philanthropic individuals, of almost all religious denominations, are uniting in judgment on the inconsistency of that depopulating and deplorable system with the Christian Dispensation.

The reader is now referred to the work itself; and if it afford him an agreeable and innocent recreation, it will be so far gratifying to the writer; but he would finally, and earnestly, recommend to considerations of a still higher nature:—should he have cause in future to indulge the belief that it has tended, in some measure, to the instruction of inexperienced youth, and to

excite in them a closer attention to the many valuable contents of the inestimable Volume from which these facts have been derived, it will be to him a superior and pleasing reward.

C. F.

Kirbymoorside, 1826.

D A V I D.

Book the First.

ARGUMENT.

Introduction.—Saul yet reigns King, though rejected.—**Reasons for his rejection.**—His gloomy state of mind described.—Samuel is directed to go to Jesse's house, and to anoint one of his sons in the room of Saul.—Hesitates through diffidence, and fear of Saul.—Is relieved from fear, and goes.—The Bethlehemites are afraid of him, but become reconciled, and join with him at a sacrifice.—Samuel's false judgement on the sons.—David is fetched from the field, and approved.—A description of him.—Samuel anoints him privately.—Saul's horrors, and disquietude of mind.—His servants propose music to him, to revive his spirits.—David proposed as an expert harper, and sent for.—Saul's approval and love of him.—David returns home.—The Philistines renew the war, with their champion, Goliath, in front of their army.—A description of him.—Jesse sends David with presents to his brethren in Saul's army.—Their interview.—Goliath's advance, and threats.—David's courageous and zealous conduct in spite of oppositions.—After several conferences with his brethren and Saul, he accepts the giant's challenge.—Refuses Saul's armour, and equips himself with only his sling and pebbles.—The different speeches which pass between the combatants.—They meet.—David slings one of his pebbles.—The giant falls, and dies.—David cuts off his head, and runs with it to the king.

DAVID.

Book the First.

While present deeds the mass of men engage,
Bound to the period of the passing age,
Let us a range of wider views essay ;
Go ages back to ancient things survey,
And from these times in grateful numbers bring
The pious life of an illustrious King,
Who from a shepherd, low in rank, became
The first of Monarchs in the rolls of fame ;
Whose chequer'd days, and many conflicts, yield
For contemplation an abundant field.
There strange events we may observant scan,
And hold the mirror of mankind to man,
Where he may view the scenes reflected pass,
That mark his steps as on a sea of glass ;
And hence in fear and cautious care be led
His path to ponder, and a slip to dread.
Verse will attract, and oft attention gain
When, if in prose, it would be done in vain ;

Then may this work a two-fold sense impart,
To please the taste, and to improve the heart :
Since here we have to trace from page to page
Examples to all ranks, and every age,
Which will not only bring to present view
What to avoid, but what we should pursue.

The Hebrew nation was a favour'd land,
Govern'd by judges in supreme command,
Where, freed from Pagans, Jews select abode,
And paid their homage to one only God.
Yet they grew discontented when they saw
Contiguous states enjoy monarchical law,
And kings in splendour with high honours crown'd
Bask in the blaze, and cast a glare around.
Too envious then, they wish'd to emulate,
And raise a king, e'en in superior state,
Who elevated, might, with sovereign hand,
In dazzling grandeur matchless awe command,
Assert their rights without control, afar,
And raise their banners over all in war.
In this they err'd ;—and yet the grant was given
For gracious purpose by indulgent Heaven ;
A gift that might each flattering view have gain'd,
Had every one his proper rank sustain'd ;
For things go well, when kings through all
maintain
A righteous conduct, and with justice reign,
And faithful subjects prompt attention pay
To every duty, and the laws obey.

The sacred choice at first was fix'd on one
Well qualified to occupy the throne ;
On Saul, the son of Kish, of mental's bright,
Of arm athletic, and superior height,
In whom at once commanding awe was seen,
A sovereign grandeur, and a graceful mien,
And whose pure life, and humble, ductile mind,
Gave proof of fitness for the rank assign'd.
Thus raised to power, he for a season proved
The people's blessing, and a chief beloved ;
But ah, alas !—he came in lapse of time,
To slight his favours, and increase in crime,
And by refractory deeds, with pride elate,
At last to forfeit his imperial state !

Yet on Saul's brow the sacred crown remains,
He wields the sceptre, and o'er Israel reigns ;
In outward rank of majesty appears,
Now well arrived at reverential years.
Pity indeed, where gifts so great combined,
Both of external, and the mental kind,
There should in him, alas ! be wanting still
To Heaven's injunctions the subservient will ;
But these rejected, halcyon days are o'er ;
Aid is withheld, and he is blest no more !
His helm thus gone, his shatter'd bark is tost
By jarring winds, as on a troubled coast.
Disquietudes within his breast are bred,
And floating visions occupy his head ;

Not friends, nor feast, his gloomy sadness cheers,
But horrors haunt, and fears succeed to fears.
His views are cross'd ;—in vain he bears the shield;
For wars o'erpowering desolate the field,
And all his forces, which had conquerors been
In matchless arms, now tremble at the scene.
A mournful change! for that great Power who
 brings
To retribution all the deeds of kings,
Had thus withdrawn his holy help from Saul,
Fail'd him in war, and doom'd his final fall!

But, ere proceeding, let us first rehearse
What in conclusion brought the sad reverse,
For potent reasons we may clearly see
Do prove the justice of the dire decree.

After forbearance long, now came the time
That Amalek had fill'd his cup of crime,
For oft we find that sin o'erwhelming brings
Ruin to empires, and the fall of kings ;
Their sins to such enormous height had come,
As drew upon them this decisive doom ;
“ That war should cause exterminating death
To blot that nation from the face of earth.”—
Hence Samuel was sent to charge their fall
To be inflicted by the hand of Saul,
And so complete as to include the least
Of human species, and of every beast.
He went—and wrought *in part* the high command,
The work performing with a partial hand,

Saving their king, the best of cattle too,
And stores of spoil that glittered in his view.
Returning with this train, he Samuel meets,
Whom thus the monarch with deception greets :
“Blest of the Lord be thou ;—whilst to fulfil
His high behest, I have perform’d his will.”

But Samuel knew more—he knew, and mourn’d,
Then thus in question to the king return’d :
“Why then these sounds, which strike my
feelings deep,
The lowing oxen, and the bleating sheep ?
These are sad omens that mine ears assail,
And bode events that must o’er thee prevail ;
For I am bound by high command to call
Thee from thy station, and denounce thy fall !
Remember times now past, and thou wilt find
For thee, alas ! a mournful change of mind ;
Then thou wast humble, little, meek, and wise,
And saw’st things clearly with unclouded eyes.
Favourite of Heaven ;—thy merits gain’d thee love
And kind attention from thy God above ;
By whose direction, and by whose command,
I crown’d thee Sovereign o’er this honour’d land.
But sad reverse ! for I must now declare
Thy deeds are changed, and future ills prepare ;
For disobedience and rebellion move
The Lord to wrath, where He had blest with love.
Hence He decrees thou shalt no longer stand
A king deputed o’er his favour’d land,

But that thy station shall be given to one
Of more desert to occupy the throne."

Saul heard with sad dismay this dreadful news
That sunk at once his self-exalted views ;
From shift to shift he was compell'd to fly,
And scarcely could with trembling lips reply.
At last he own'd his sin ; but now too late
To change the purpose, or improve his state ;
His doom was seal'd, and soon, alas ! it came
To stamp disgrace, and stigmatize his name ;
For, overcome in military strife,
He lost his crown—and with his crown—his life !

As Saul was doomed to yield the sacred crown,
One was selected to ascend the throne,
Whose virtuous life might in th' historic page
Be an example worthy every age,
And show to future times how Heaven can raise
From low degree to dignity and praise,
Advance in life the worthy and the just,
And prostrate lay the pride of man in dust.

The sad events how likely to befall
O'ercame the Prophet—he lamented Saul ;
But did not long sustain a troubled breast,
Ere from on high came this Divine behest :
" How long, O Samuel, wilt thou grieve for Saul,
And mourn o'er evils which that king befall !

Sure thou hast seen him thus unfit to stand
The guide and guardian o'er my favoured land,
Whom for his crimes, and for that cause alone,
I have decreed to dispossess the throne.
I bid thee, then, to fill thy horn with oil,
And set thy foot to tread another soil :
To Bethlehem go, and there anoint me one
Of Jesse's sons to occupy the throne,
For I select him to succeed to Saul,
And rise proportion'd to that Monarch's fall."

This seems not pleasant to the Prophet's ear,
For thus he answers, and betrays his fear :
" But how can I, O Lord ! fulfil thy word
And not draw on me a revengeful sword ?
For if Saul hear, so great his rage will be
That death, most certain, will be wreak'd on me."

His gracious God with condescension hears,
And thus returns, to pacify his fears :
" Go then, and to the place an heifer take,
And say, I come a sacrifice to make :
To this call Jesse, and his household train,
And I will show thee whom I choose to reign."

Encouraged thus, the faithful Prophet went
In solemn musing on the great event.
On his arrival all surprised appear,
And panic-struck with universal fear :

Some pending judgment now they thought was
come,

And Samuel charged to bear the dreadful doom.
Hence, anxious for the worst, or for release,
The elders question, "Art thou come in peace?"
"I come in peace," said he; "with me partake,
For I am come a sacrifice to make;
Then sanctify yourselves, for all to prove,
By sacred tokens, our devoted love."

Glad of such news, they soon in crowds unite
And join in zeal to pay the solemn rite.
With fervent heart old Jesse leaves his home,
And, sanctified, he and his children come;
Present themselves, and readily prepare
In all the duties of these rites to share.
The Prophet's eye Eliab first beheld,
A portly person, fit the sword to wield,
In whom the aspect of a King was seen,
Nobly depicted in his stately mien;
In such externals, to the views of all,
A faithful transcript of ejected Saul:
And hence the Prophet, from the sight alone,
Deem'd him, as sure, to be the chosen one.
But how misled! although a well-versed sage
Through intuition, and experienced age,
Yet when off steady watch, thou wast inclined
To wrongful bias, and to swerve in mind.

A proof to us this by example brings,
How weak man's judgment is in sacred things.

Here Samuel's thoughts, of superficial kind,
Soon found a check to rectify his mind,
For thus the Lord, in language understood,
Corrects his error in convincing mood :
" Look not to stature, countenance, or mien,
Nor set thy judgment God and man between ;
For know that I refuse this son to bear
My people's sceptre, or the crown to wear.
Man sees as man, charm'd with the outward part ;
But I regard the influence of the heart,
For there alone the holy virtues spring
To fit a person to become a King."

By this reproof, the Prophet awed with fear,
Gives to his Lord a strict, attentive ear ;
Surrenders self, his only wish to find
The perfect purpose of th' Unerring Mind.

Now one by one all Jesse's sons appear,
'Till seven pass on before th' attentive Seer,
Who now is able, clear of sight, to see
That none of these the favoured one must be.
Convinced of this, he doubts that all appear,
And questions thus, " Are all thy children here?"
The parent then replied : " I still have one
Thou hast not yet beheld ; my youngest son,
Whose province is a rural life to share,
And in the fields to tend my fleecy care."

“Go fetch him then,”—is Samuel’s command,
 “For till he come my mission makes a stand.”

Dispatch’d in haste, a messenger was sent
 To bring the stripling from his homely tent.
 David appear’d :—he stood, a ruddy youth,
 Adorn’d with looks of innocence and truth :
 Of comely aspect ; healthy, strong and fair,
 Well calculated storms and toils to bear,
 Where spirits seem’d with corporal strength to vie
 In the prompt action and the sparkling eye.
 He was approved :—“Now,” said the Lord,
 “arise,
 Nor age nor stature in the youth despise ;
 Anoint him King ;—the rest I will dispose,
 For I select him for a noble cause.”

Obedient to the high and prompt command
 The Prophet took the horn and raised his hand,
 Then poured the oil on David’s youthful head
 To rule a kingdom and its armies lead ;
 On whom now came, from that eventful hour,
 A holy spirit from th’Almighty Power,
 Which, added to his former state of mind
 Prepared him early for the work design’d.

The task perform’d, without the trump of fame,
 The thoughtful prophet back to Ramah came ;
 Ponder’d the things that were in vision shown,
 And mourn’d in silence for his king o’erthrown .

Saul's prosperous days are now for ever fled,
And woes unnumber'd occupy his head ;
An evil spirit makes all dark appear,
Racks all his thoughts, and fetters all with fear ;
For so the Lord had will'd—so stretch'd the chain,
But bound its influence, and confined its reign ;
Yet thus allow'd it baneful gloom to raise,
His nights to sadden, and eclipse his days,
To let him feel, e'en in the present time
Part of the evils consequent on crime.

The watchful servants now their king beheld
Beneath th' oppression of this spirit yield,
Who were all anxious to remove the cause,
Or at the least to mitigate his woes ;
Hence, as they such commiseration feel,
They meekly thus their sentiments reveal :
“ We see, O King ! an evil spirit come
To blast thy blessings, and o'ercast with gloom ;
Then let our lord be pleased to give command
To seek a harper chief in all the land,
That when these glooms perplex in future days,
He may the charms of lively music raise,
Its soothing notes by varying sounds display,
And drive the horrors that distract away,
For we conceive, of all external things,
Music to man reanimation brings.”

The proposition pleased ; thus glad to find
A ray of hope to his benighted mind,

From any outward means to quit the pest
That so intruded, and destroy'd his rest.
Hence he replies : " Search then, select, and
bring

A hand expert to tune the trembling string,
That haply, by his soft melodious strain,
I may the sweets of former times regain."

A servant then rejoin'd : " One I have seen
Well versed in music, and of comely mien,
Son to one Jesse, skilful in the art ;
A man of prudence, and of martial heart,
Whose head with wisdom for his years is stored,
Beloved of man, and favour'd of the Lord."

Most grateful this ;—an errand quick is sent,
While on the issue Saul is deep intent.
To Jesse's house the messengers now came,
And thus address'd him in the royal name :
" We come to thee in peace, sent by the King,
And this petition from thy monarch bring ;
That for a season thou wilt kindly spare
Thy son, the shepherd, from his rural care ;
For he has heard of his proficient art
By cheering music, to revive the heart ;
And one he wants a while with him to stay
To entertain him with his lively play,
For in some lonely hours he's overcome
With drooping spirits, and is prone to gloom."

Mild Jesse soon agreed :—and now prepares
To part the stripling from his little cares,
His humble cot of mud and straw to leave,
For a grand palace near a king to live ;
Change simple scenes for elegant resort,
And arts, and actions, and intrigues of court ;
His pastoral hymns forego, to hear the jar
Of active life, and martial songs of war,
And see, instead of peaceful flocks survey'd,
Thick ranks of troops, with glittering arms
display'd.

The thoughtful father now equipp'd the lad
In his best suit, with presents best he had,
A compliment, in his parental view,
On such occasions from a father due.
A stately ass, of all his stock the head,
He loads with wine, the fattest kid, and bread,
For such his store ; and, though but plain to bring
To please the great, and even here—a king,
Yet they bore witness of his hearty zeal
To grant his utmost for his sovereign's weal.
'Tis not by cost such tokens we approve,
But as sincere, and as the pledge of love ;
Hence smaller things are often valued more
Than splendid gifts from an abundant store.

Provided thus, the youthful rustic goes
To meet he knows not what—of bliss—or woes ;

But in the sequel such as rarely can
Become the mingled, changeful lot of man.
These 'tis our task, in retrospective view,
Faithful to trace, and on the page renew,
Which will in us our mixt sensations raise,
'T' admire—condemn—to honour, blame, and
praise ;
But paramount, we shall be pleased to find
A noble, virtuous, and a zealous mind.

The King received the youth with open heart
In hopes of comfort from his soothing art.
His best he tried, prompt or by night or day,
Whenever call'd before the King to play;
Which for a season tended to compose,
To lull his passions, and to blunt his woes.
Thus captivated, Saul in warmth began
To prize the music, and to love the man.
Hence he requested Jesse now would spare
His son still longer from domestic care ;
For he acknowledged, to the parent's joy,
He grew in favour under his employ.
The father granted :—David now became
The royal favourite, and a youth of fame,
Promoted to the armour-bearer's place,
Each station filling with becoming grace.

A gleam of sunshine rose;—the King improved,
The music grateful, and the youth beloved ;

But time ere long by sad experience show'd,
The gall laid dormant, and was soon renew'd :
Peace was but transient ;—music could not go
Down to the root of his conflicting woe ;
The cause laid deeper far, and call'd for more
Than harp or timbrel could to him restore ;
And even music, which may sweet appear,
In time grows dull, and satiates the ear.
Thus may the dusky Ethiopian try
To change the colour of his sable dye ;
But vain attempt !—no wash can change the skin,
Too deep the tincture takes its seat within.

Here many comforts David might enjoy,
Yet strange to him was such a changed employ,
Changed from th' engagements of his early youth,
Sweet times of peace, of innocence, and truth.
To these his favourites oft his thoughts he turn'd,
And at the loss of what he loved, he mourn'd.
At last he sees the favoured season come
To leave the palace for his peaceful home,
Which he embraces with an anxious mind
The placid comforts of past scenes to find.
Home he regains, his solid peace and ease,
Where irksome trammels and court-bustles cease ;
Resuming there his former sacred strain
Of hymns and psalms, he tunes his harp again,
And there, beneath a sweet cerulean sky,
He quiet sat, while flocks were grazing by :

And oft he sang :—" When I the heavens survey
Which thy great works, Almighty God, display,
The sun—the moon—the stars—by day and night,
I'm lost in Thee, thy majesty and might,
And think of man, that thou from heav'n shouldst
bow

To visit him—a worm on earth below !
Yet thou hast given him a capacious mind,
A little lower than th' angelic kind,
And crown'd with honour, whilst at thy command
He rules creation over sea and land."

While David thus ;—Saul is at active war
With pagan forces muster'd from afar,
Whose chiefs into the field vast armies draw,
And keep the Hebrews in perpetual awe.
Th' opposing hosts on adverse hills are seen
Divided only by a vale between,
While from the ranks on the Philistine side,
Issue the vaunts of insolence and pride,
Who now, buoy'd up, roll the triumphant car,
And spread their banners as the chief in war,
Where first in front, to lead and awe command,
Goliath takes his elevated stand ;
A giant famed, who, since the world began,
Was never equal'd by the race of man.
Six cubits and a span his towering height
With limbs proportion'd, and of equal might ;
Whose savage looks to all around impart
The certain marks of a ferocious heart.

Thus this huge champion with grim visage stands,
And braves the mightiest of the sacred bands.
Day after day his challenge he renews,
And all around with eye indignant views,
At whose high stature, and gigantic frown,
Saul's troops recoil regardless of renown ;
They hear with terror the loud vaunting foe,
And sink desponding ere he strikes a blow.

Here in Saul's army, check'd by these alarms,
Two sons of Jesse were employ'd in arms,
From whom the father often wish'd to hear,
As their known perils raised parental fear ;
And anxious too some tokens to convey
To those who now in camp and danger lay,
David he calls, his youngest son, to bear
His pledge of kindness to these sons in war.
"Go now," says he, "and to thy brethren take
These small memorials for their father's sake :
With these provisions to the army tread,
Of cheese, parch'd corn, and latest batch of bread ;
And in respect, (for such the great receive,)
Ten of the cheeses to their captain give.

Soon as the morn, with oriental light
Diffused its beams, and chased away the night,
The youth arose with prompt and pliant will,
His father's orders anxious to fulfil.
With one of trust he left his bleating care
And sped with ardour to the field of war.

Arrived at camp ; loud shoutings rend the sky,
To dare to battle, and the Jews defy.
David intent ; his charge with one he leaves,
The carriage-keeper, and his care relieves ;
Then with fraternal haste he darts among
The glittering ranks and military throng,
And finds his brethren, whom, in part by guess,
He recognizes in their martial dress.
He asks their health, if well in war they fare ?
And kindly tells them of their father's care.
They in return ;—but while they talking stood
Their foe advanced, and, in terrific mood,
Defied their armies with a thundering roar,
As oft repeated in the days before ;
Daring in challenge, at his usual post,
The strength and courage of the sacred host.
“ Accurs'd,” says he, “ now from my vengeance
fly,
Or meet your fate, and be content to die.
You I defy !—but why this gathering power,
To end the conflict of a single hour,
When here alone, to you advanced I stand,
And dare the bravest of your mighty band ?
Then if you boast a hero, let him come,
And here together we will seek our doom.
If death I suffer from his nervous hand,
Henceforth your slaves shall be our prostrate land ;
But if I conquer, it shall be our due
As fairly won, such servitude from you.”

At this stern language, all the host to dare,
None durst encounter such a risk in war,
But panic-struck, they look'd in sad dismay,
And let him reign the tyrant of the day.

David beheld, and, fill'd with holy zeal,
His bosom panted for his country's weal,
When he no longer could inert remain,
And thus broke forth in an emphatic strain :
“ What is yon foe that he should thus appear,
With head uplifted, and defying spear,
To come in arms array'd, and vaunting, boast,
To be the terror of Jehovah's host,
Affright your warriors with his martial nod,
And scorn the armies of the living God ?
What!—not an arm that can the monster slay,
To take from Israel this reproach away ?

His brethren heard him, (as they stood not far,)
Thus speak with courage like a man of war ;
Who judge as men, and gladly would persuade
To keep at distance from the tyrant's blade ;
And stern Eliab, whom it ill became,
Thus chides with rashness to repress his flame :
“ Why com'st thou here ?—whom hast thou left
to keep
Amidst the desert thy neglected sheep ?
I know thy haughtiness, thy schemes of art,
Thy lofty notions, and thy pride of heart ;

For thou art come, where thou hast no employ,
To see the battle, and the sight enjoy.
Harsh was the charge, a poor requital made
For all the kindness which the youth convey'd ;
Enough indeed to quash and keep him still,
If prompted only by the human will,
But close he kept to his more certain guide,
That check'd resentment, or retort of pride,
And, in the room of irritated ire,
More warmly raised his supernatural fire :
Hence short he question'd, (pointing to their foes,)
“ Where have I err'd—See ! is there not a cause ? ”

Meek, and yet firm, all oppositions fail,
Nor can persuasions to retract prevail,
For now he offers to accept the call
To single combat for his sovereign Saul ;
To meet at once in the unequal fight
To hurl the tyrant from his towering height,
And free the army from their long annoy,
To the king's comfort, and the kingdom's joy.

Thus David's firmness close attention drew,
And strong sensations moved the trembling crew,
Where all admired the energy and zeal
Profess'd so warmly for the public weal ;
And though a judgement from external view
No sanguine hopes could in their breasts renew,
(Such disproportion struck at once the sight,
In arms, in armour, countenance, and might,)

Yet on their gloom this cast a cheering ray,
That void of hazard they might win the day,
By favour gain, if Heaven the zeal instill'd,
Or lose but little, if they lost the field.
Hence to encourage, in alluring strain,
They state rewards that such a deed would gain.
“Our Lord the King,” with emphasis they said,
“This price has fix'd upon the tyrant's head ;
The victor, and his father's house, shall be
Clear of taxation, and for ever free,
With riches—honours—and the gift of one
Of his fair daughters, to become his son.”

Thus some endeavour'd to augment his flame
By sounding freedom—wealth—alliance—fame ;
Whilst some, who proud of news like this to bear,
Rehearsed it quickly in the monarch's ear,
And soon return'd, commanding them to bring
The cheering youth before the drooping king ;
Who, now bereft of better sight, as man
Look'd on the deed, and doubting thus began :
“Thy valour's great, but thy experience far
From needful knowledge in the arts of war.
Thou art a youth, and of inferior height ;
He a huge monster of o'erwhelming might :
Thy habits peaceful, free from bloody strife ;
He versed in slaughter from his early life,
Whose very aspect, and high fame in arms,
Fore-run his deeds, and far diffuse alarms.

— In such a case can I then entertain
The smallest hopes to have the giant slain ?”

Thus Saul;—when David undismay’d began :
“ O mighty monarch, thou exalted man,
No more despond, nor let thy courage fail,
For know this tyrant never can prevail;
Though for a while he may, with fierce command,
Diffuse alarms, and paralyse the land,
Yet his career must end ;—his time is past,
And all his boastings will receive a blast.
I will go fight him, and my lord shall see,
Where blessings fall—on pagans, or on thee ;
For Israel has been raised with mighty hand
To root pollutions from the sinful land.
Youth that I am, unknown to public fame,
Yet what I’ve done the future shall proclaim ;
For once, in tending of my father’s stock,
A lion rush’d amidst the trembling flock,
And stole a lamb ;—with eager haste I ran,
And to engage the king of beasts began.
He roar’d and struggled through the deadly fray,
But I was favour’d, and I won the day ;
I made the monarch of the woods to bleed,
And life to forfeit for th’ audacious deed.
So once a bear, upon one closing day,
Purloin’d a sheep, and thieving slunk away ;
But I pursued him with his suffering prize,
Tore out his life, and left him to the skies.

Thy servant thus, in single-handed strife,
Bereft the lion and the bear of life ;
Like one of these, th' uncircumcised shall die,
And his vast army shall like cowards fly,
Since he profane on sacred things has trod,
And scorn'd the armies of the living God ;
For that great Power which held the lion's paw,
Will lay in dust the proud, triumphing foe,
Through means unlooked for will diffuse alarm,
And send his vengeance by a feeble arm,"

Thus David spoke, and by his cheering strain
The King revives, and feels some hope again ;
His fears reduce—a martial glow succeeds,
Raised by th' heroic speech, and promised deeds ;
“Go then,” says he, “and be the Lord with thee,
To bless thy efforts, and the nation free ;
And sure reward shall to the act succeed
To crown the prowess of so great a deed.”

But ere he goes, the King his care extends,
And the young hero for the fight defends,
Placing dependance on external things,
For such, alas, are carnal-minded kings.
All his own armour o'er the youth he spread,
His coat of mail, and helmet for the head,
With his grand sword :—but David quickly found
He must not venture on such slender ground ;
Hence these he casts—protection lays aside,
And keeps close govern'd by his surer Guide.

Thus Saul he left ; then from a neighbouring brook
Into his bag five flinty pebbles took.

These, and his sling and staff, his arms compose ;
With these he faces his tremendous foes,
The chief of whom, tho' high in martial fame,
Ne'er moved the tenor of his noble aim :
Praise-worthy task ! the lofty to pull down,
And to restore the sceptre to the crown.

Meanwhile the Gathian, conscious of his power,
Strode on, unconscious of the fatal hour ;
Vaunting aloud the dread of Israel stood,
Big with the thoughts of slaughter and of blood.
A helmet, carved, of brass high polish'd made,
Claspt round his locks, to save his brawny head ;
A metal target, cumbersome and strong,
Betwixt his shoulders, force-defying, hung ;
A well-proved mail his frame surrounded, bright,
Of size amazing, and of ponderous weight ;
Five thousand shekels weigh'd the bullion mass
Composed entirely of refulgent brass.
From his high knee, continued to the ground,
Metallic greaves his legs environ'd round ;
Whose limbs for muscles ne'er were match'd
before,
Nor the whole system for athletic power.
Proud in his hand he held a monstrous spear,
And often wheel'd it to excite a fear.
Six hundred shekels weigh'd the weapon's head,
And high-proof steel composed the glittering blade ;

The ponderous staff of which, alone, might seem
Once to have been an ample weaver's beam.
A dangling sword hung sheath'd, and o'er the field
A page before him bore a studded shield,
More for a pageant show, and high parade,
Than any safeguard from a warrior's blade.

Thus clad in arms the champion paced the
ground,
And with high scorn survey'd the powers around ;
Holding defiance in his sanguine hand,
He deem'd the Jews a servile, conquer'd band.
As some wild steed, in lux'rious pastures fed,
Snorts at the crowd, and flings aloft his head ;
So stretch'd Goliath—prancing—frowning—vain,
And on opposers look'd with high disdain.
But David fear'd not ;—nor he longer stood,
But rush'd to combat for his country's good ;
With active step, to meet in duel, came,
Regardless of his might, or mighty fame,
And bravely scorn'd the loudly sounding shield,
Or all the shoutings of the high-flush'd field.

Behold the meeting combatants !—see here
A rural youth, without a shield or spear,
Stranger to war, who never learnt to throw
A death-wing'd arrow from th' elastic bow.
No coat of mail to save his person on,
But shepherd-like, in humble dress alone ;

No martial aspect, nor a frowning brow,
But comely featured, and in stature low.
This only he, (which all his looks proclaim,)
A youthful, meek, an unoffending swain.
But there opposed,—Goliath!—man of might!
Of frowning aspect, and stupendous height;
High-skill'd in acts attendant on the shield,
And flush'd with conquests in the martial field.
Of military port the dread of all,
From the raw plough-boy to experienced Saul,
Graced out with ponderous arms, of polish high,
That flash and glitter, dazzling to the eye,
And clad in mail, which never man before
Could bear the weight of, nor in battle wore.

Thus stood the two ;—whilst David's state and
age,
Swell'd up Goliath with redoubled rage,
Whose starting eyes roll'd with convulsive fire,
And a flush'd face betray'd his inward ire ;
Upon the topmost pinnacle of pride,
Aloof he stood, and all the world defied ;
In high disdain he held our warrior's age,
And thus he vented his indignant rage :
“ Am I a dog?—where does my weakness lie,
That with thy staff thou mean'st my power to try?
Come here, rash boy! to feel my ponderous blade
And death shall hover o'er thy swimming head ;,
Then for devouring beasts thou shalt be food,
And ravenous dogs shall lap thy streaming blood,

Wild hungry vultures tear thy mangled frame,
And future ages stigmatize thy name,
Who dar'st thus come, with arrogant design,
To tempt the vengeance of an arm like mine."

Thus having said, some steps advanced he trod,
And cursed our warrior by his idol-god.
When he had ended, David then began
To answer thus the dread-commanding man :
"Thou com'st to me with sword, with shield,
and spear,
Presuming—cursing—and devoid of fear ;—
Not so I come to thee ; few are my arms,
Nor calculated to excite alarms ;
But in the Name, and with the chastening rod,
I come to thee, of our Almighty God,
The Lord of Hosts, that ruling Power, denied
By thee and thine, and in your pride defied.
But know !—for this He will his might reveal,
And right of vengeance on your armies seal,
When all shall see, as they behold th' alarms,
He can chastise without the aid of arms ;
For to the Lord belongs the righteous cause,
Whose indignation will o'erwhelm his foes :
And, spite of all, in this unequal field,
Thou and thy army shall be made to yield,
And thy prediction, so severe on me,
Shall in full force be hurl'd on thine and thee ;
For at my feet thou soon shalt tumble dead,
And thine own sword shall sever off thy head,

When thou and numbers of thy host shall lay
To ravenous vultures and wild beasts a prey.
'Tis not myself, I know, (poor, weak, and frail,)
That can o'er thee, thy arms, and power prevail :
Ah, no indeed !—but 'tis decreed on high
That thou and thousands of thy host shall die.
Assured of this, I take the field alone ;
I face thy fury, and your gods I scorn,
From whom I fear no ill, I dread no fall,
For our JEHOVAH rules and reigns o'er all,
Who will by this to aftertimes disclose
Where man for safety can alone repose,
And show that all who in their idols trust
Depend on shadows, and confide in dust.

This language vex'd the overbearing foe,
Who now prepared to give the deadly blow,
And, swinging round in air his massive lance,
With murdercous mien, he makes one step advance ;
But David, who the brandish'd sword defied,
Still firmly on Omnipotence relied,
And having in his weapon fix'd a stone,
A simple pebble, and but only one,
He, all alert, made every muscle spring,
That plied the force of his unerring sling ;
When from its fangs the whizzing bullet flew,
By secret guidance in direction true,
And in the giant's head, with ringing sound,
Impress'd the brain, and struck a deadly wound.

He reel'd confused, as if the shock to brave,
But soon he fell, beyond all power to save,
With thund'ring sound, prone from his tow'ring
height,
And eyes that sunk in death's eternal night,
To close his long career of blood and strife,
And end in forfeit his ferocious life.
As the tall cedar falls with crashing sound,
And far extends its shatter'd boughs around ;
So fell at once this vast, stupendous frame,
And left oblivion to entomb his fame.

The clashing fall, and clang of brazen arms,
Flew through the host, and spread the dire alarms,
For far they roll'd, by distant echoes tost,
And died away in tremulous murmurs lost.
All were deep struck, confounded and amazed,
While each on each in wild disorder gazed,
For in despondence, and o'erwhelming grief,
All hope departed with their fallen chief.

Behold the monster now along the ground,
Expanded laid, with scatter'd arms around ;
Outstretch'd in death, and all his boastings fled,
A useful caution to presumption laid.
To him th' heroic youth now nimbly ran,
And stood elated o'er the fallen man,
Unsheath'd his sword, and, with the glittering
blade,
By bold incision, sever'd off his head.

Reanimation now with rapture ran,
Through Israel's camp, diffused from man to man,
Whose hearts no longer palpitate with fear,
Nor former terrors in their looks appear;
For when, through aid of over-ruling Power,
Success attended in that happy hour,
Alacrity unbound, and vigour new,
With martial valour through the army flew,
And to th' illustrious hero then arose
A simultaneous burst of high applause ;
Loud acclamations rang throughout the band,
Reverberating o'er the joyful land.

Ere the meridian of that morning's sun
This highly favoured, brilliant deed was done ;
And when the host of adverse power beheld
Their mighty hero slaughtered on the field,
And all th' opprest emerging from their fear,
Rushing impetuous in a full career,
The lately hectoring warriors began
To fly their stations, and for safety ran.
Swift from the field, o'er the retreating plain,
The rescued host pursued the vanquish'd train,
And in the rout, the flying troops o'erthrew
Unnumber'd wounded, and vast numbers slew.

Meantime the victor (while the army fled)
The camp, the treasures, and the arms survey'd,
Where spoils awhile employed his busy care,
As due to conquerors in the field of war,

But done with speed, he quickly turned again
His keen attention to the monster slain,
Whose head he takes, and bears along the ground,
As blood fresh issues from the recent wound,
Holding this token in his burden'd hand
Of the deliverance of their suffering land.

Thus youthful David, chief of heroes found,
Was early with exalted honours crowned,
For even females, with their harp and voice,
Could with the soldiers in the joy rejoice.
And now, while victory raised th' exulting song,
With nimble step he buoyant tript along,
And to the king with joy triumphant ran
To give this trophy of the conquer'd man.

Whilst David thus convey'd the member slain,
He met with Abner as he crossed the plain,
Who, struck with rapture at so brave a deed,
(Which all at once had thus his country freed,)
Praised his high valour, and advanced his name,
As well entitled to the meed of fame.
Uniting thus in triumph o'er the dead,
He to the king the youthful victor led,
Where David at his feet transported cast
The pleasing signs of what so lately passed ;
At sight of which the late desponding Saul
Gave rapturous welcome to the tyrant's fall,
With pleasure looked upon each wounded pore,
And thought the time of all his troubles o'er.

Grateful to David, he unites applause
For such exertions in the public cause,
And will not grant him any more to leave
The royal palace with his sire to live,
But place assigns him underneath his dome
T' employ his future days and make his home,
Intent to raise him and advance him still,
As qualified the higher ranks to fill,
For thus relieved as by a single stroke,
It transient thanks and gratitude awoke.

Thus closed the huge Goliath's hostile life,
A chief and champion in Philistine strife,
Who long had stood their guard and guiding star,
And mighty bulwark in the front of war,
Whose acts and death have, in the sacred page,
Been handed down from thence through every age,
Due cautions and instructions to convey,
E'en to the people of the present day.

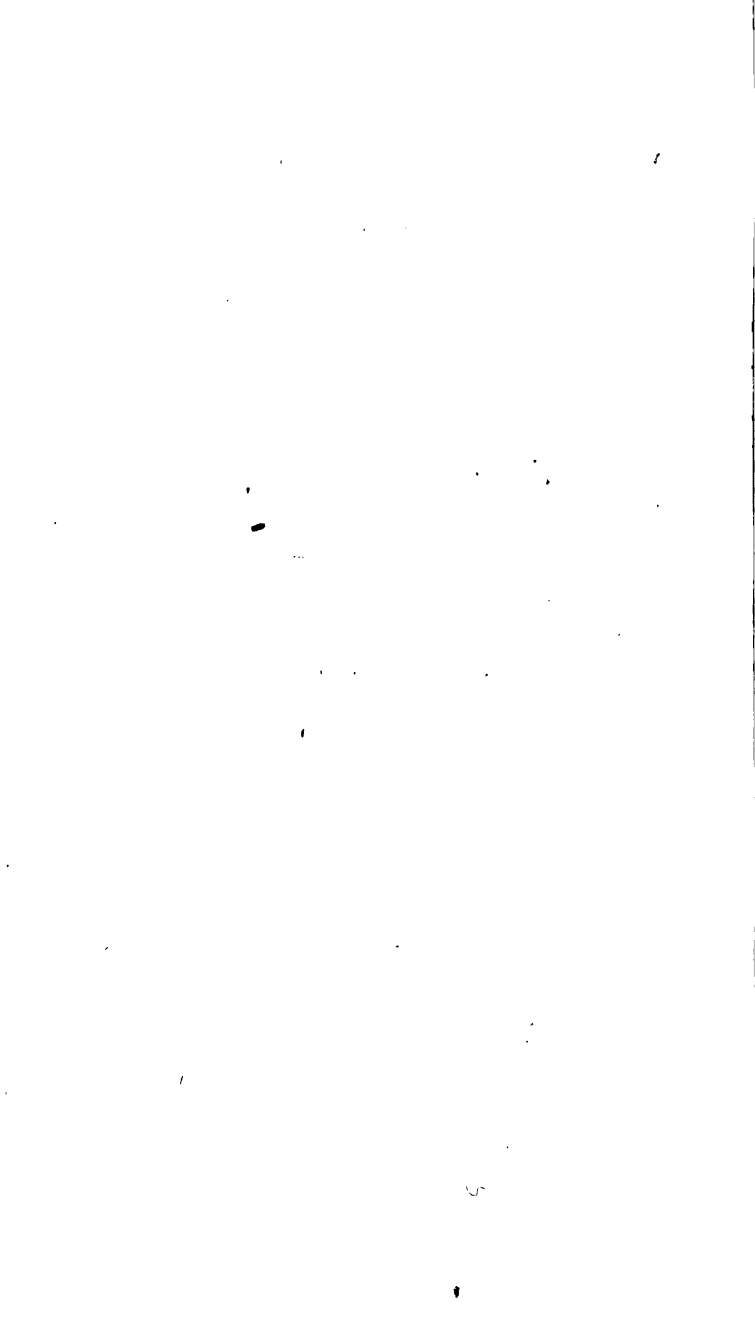
Who was it that events like these did send ?
Who worked these wonders, and produced this
end ?

Is it of chance we can these things relate ?—
Of fickle fortune, or determined fate ?
No !—spurn the thought !—nay, almost let the
name

Suffuse the Christian with a blush of shame !
It was the Almighty's work ; that great First Cause,
From whence all being to existence rose ;

Whose powerful *Fiat*, and creative might,
Formed earth, and ocean, and the solar light ;
Who made this globe know its diurnal race,
And whirl'd the planets in the field of space.
Hence, He who gave to all its wondrous birth,
Can all dissolve, and sink at once in death :
That Sovereign power, who said, " Let there be
light,"
With equal ease could say, " Let there be night,"
When sun and stars to darkness would be hurl'd,
And chaos-horrors overwhelm the world !

END OF BOOK FIRST.



D A V I D.



Book the Second.

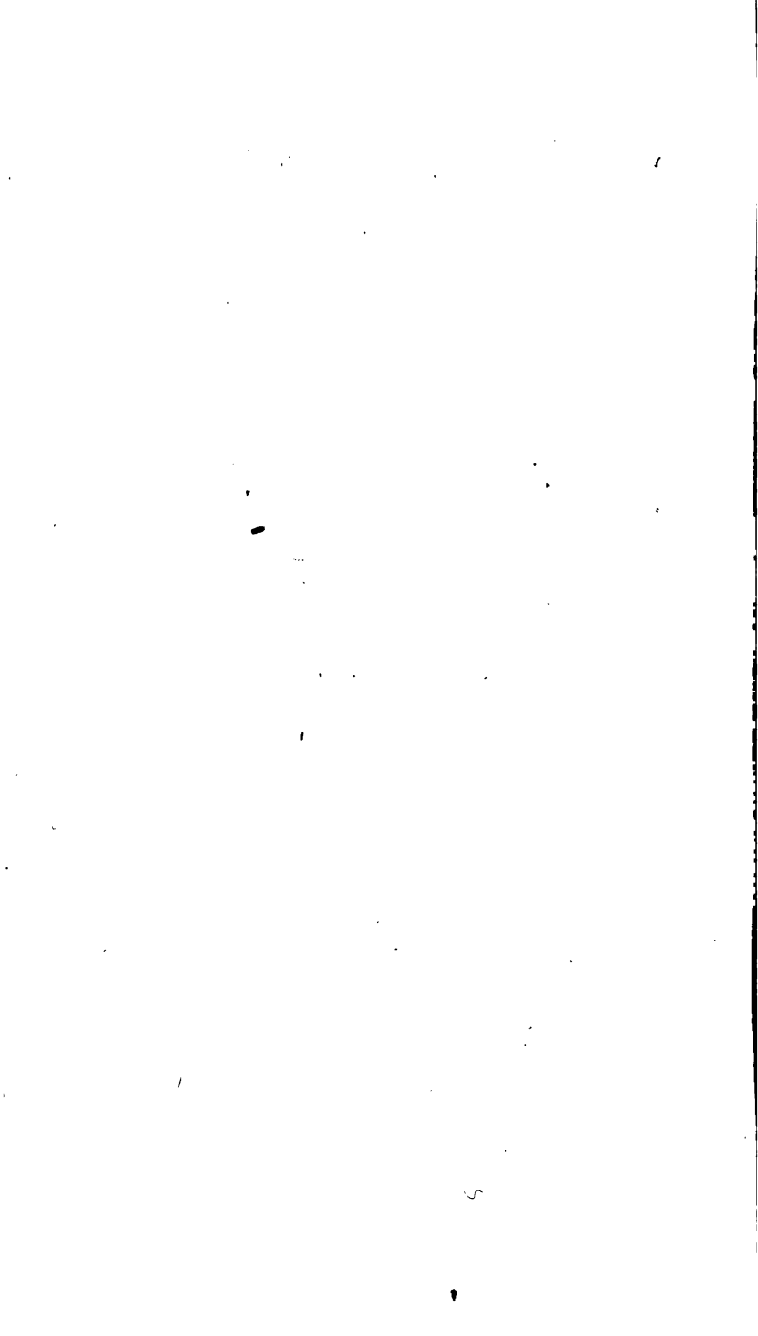
ARGUMENT.

Jonathan being closely attached to David, a strong and mutual love commences.—David's great advance in favour with the people and at court.—Saul's gloomy darkness, and envy of David.—He meditates his death, and casts a javelin at him.—David is reduced in office and credit, as far as Saul can accomplish it.—He attempts his death in a dangerous exploit in war, under promise of his eldest daughter, Merab.—David succeeds, but Saul gives her to another.—David and a younger sister, Michal, are mutually attached.—She is offered him at the price of another hazardous engagement.—He again proving successful, has his favourite given him.—The marriage.—Saul renews his hatred to his now Son-in-law.—Fresh war with the Philistines.—A battle, in which David and his forces are victorious.—His praise excites fresh envy in Saul, who orders his servants to kill him.—Jonathan informs David, and they propose a plan to sound the father's real state of mind.—Jonathan pleads with his father on David's behalf.—He succeeds, and Saul grants David's life with an oath.—All now reconciled at Court, David resumes his musical services.—War again with the Philistines.—A successful battle raises David still higher in esteem, and proves a fresh excitement to Saul's ill will towards him.—He again throws a dart at him.—David flies home to his wife, but is sent after to be slain there.—Michal contrives and effects his escape.—He goes to Ramah.—Saul's servants are deceived by Michal, with an image instead of her husband.—Saul goes himself with threats to his daughter.—Samuel takes David to the school of the Prophets.—Saul sends different servants after him, but none return.—He goes himself, but is detained, and prophesies like the rest.—David slips home again to his wife.—Saul returns.—Jonathan and David contrive another time, after he has had this experience, to judge of his disposition at a feast.—They renew their engagements of friendship between themselves.

DAVID.

Book the Second.

At the late interview, when grateful Saul
So greeted David at the gentile's fall,
The king's next heir, in an attentive mood,
And strict observance of their conduct, stood ;
The lovely Jonathan, a noble youth,
Compound of wisdom, innocence, and truth,
Who, from the victor's mien and deed achieved,
A high opinion of his worth conceived ;
From whence the prince in sympathy began
To feel attraction and to love the man.
Of noble parts himself, he joy'd to find
In this fine youth similitude of mind ;
Hence, mutual friendship, kindly cherished, grew,
Free and refined, as ever mortals knew ;
At last so fixed and oft so strongly proved,
That times and changes neither party moved ;



D A V I D.



Book the Second.

With rippling waves, of azure, dappled o'er,
That sweetly murmur as they reach the shore ;
But when the storms arise their beauties cease,
The winds and waters know no longer peace,
But raging billows, though so calm before,
Roll mountains high, and foaming dash the
shore,

When stately barks are oft confusedly hurl'd
To wreck and ruin in a watery world :
So realized in Saul ;—to calms succeed,
Storm after storm, and many a desperate deed.

Time now for David came to bid adieu
To all the grandeur which he lately knew ;
For he must flee that court where darkness
reigns,
And thought of murder an admission gains.
The king grown jealous of increasing fame,
With grief he heard the oft-repeated name,
While at the praise upon the youth bestow'd,
With fear he trembled, and with fury glow'd.
And now to view, with aggravating thought,
The former honours to his mind are brought,
When Hebrew matrons, in their burst of joy,
Could harp and song exultingly employ,
As from the field where great Goliath bled
The chieftain back their conquering armies led ;
“ And did they not,” says he, “ upon that day
On harps and tabrets in their raptures play,

With songs of triumph, and of blazing fame .
To raise above his king the victor's name,
Proclaiming loud that on th' embattled plain
He had ten thousands—I my thousands slain ?
Advancing thus the subject o'er his lord
As they the minion for the deed adored.
What higher favour then can now be shown ?
What but the kingdom, and with it—the crown ?”

These jealous fears haunt Saul, and feed his strife,
Which prompt him to endanger David's life,
For this supplanter he resolves to slay,
And at one stroke drive all his griefs away.
But sad mistake ! for, if this pest were gone,
He soon would find they centred not in one,
Nor in externals ; for his griefs are bred
Within his breast, and by the passions fed.
One restless night he pass'd, and soon as day
Broke early light, he call'd the youth to play,
Who, ever ready at his king's command,
Brought forth his harp, and took his usual stand,
And soon began enlivening tunes to play
To drive the horrors of the night away ;
But ere a word Saul's quivering lips had pass'd,
A barbed dart he snatch'd, and fiercely cast,
When quick to David, as it went, he said,
“ Now to the wall I will transfix thee dead !”
But the keen weapon failed t' inflict the wound,
And spent its fury on the marble ground.

Foil'd in his aim, he now attempts again
A second time, but still attempts in vain,
For that great Power that overruleth all
Gave not his chosen to the will of Saul,
But interposed, with providential care,
His favoured one for future work to spare.

David, confounded at so vile a deed,
Now for his life fled with his greatest speed,
And deeply pondered to find out the cause
From whence such hatred undeserved arose ;
But, free from guilt, nor feeling conscious smart,
Peace gave some comfort to a troubled heart.
Here then commenced with thee a share of foils ;
A life perplex'd with multifarious toils,
In which thou hadst a weighty charge to bear ;
Much to enjoy—but signal griefs to share.

Saul was confused—chagrin'd—in grief and
shame,
When thus abortive his designs became,
As such attempts in that well-favoured hour,
Exposed his will, as well as futile power,
And gave the injured, unoffending swain,
Warning to guard, and shun the like again.

By degradations David now must fall
At the stern mandate of capricious Saul ;
From place and honours now, alas ! he must
Descend to stations of inferior trust.

Forbid the royal presence, he no more
Must stand in credit as in days before ;
O'er the whole nation's troops no more command,
But o'er one thousand only take his stand.
Invention's rack'd—no means are left behind,
Disgrace to foster in the public mind,
His fame to tarnish, his just rights disown
And all his merits in oblivion drown.
But vain attempt!—for though so great a fall
Was thus inflicted by revengeful Saul,
Yet here his patience, and his self-command,
Still gain'd the favour of a Heavenly Hand ;
For the same Power which had been pleased to
raise,

Would not desert him in his clouded days,
But grant him wisdom and superior light,
His steps to order and direct aright ;
Hence more he shone in each contrasted thing,
When set in view with the bewilder'd king,
Whose dark inveterate plans all blank became,
That blasted not, but much increased his fame,
And let the nation see, in clearest view
Their favours had been placed where justly due ;
That, whether high in life at court to rest,
With royal favours and chief honours blest ;
Or thus depressed, degraded, and o'erborne,
He humbly drooped, the offcast of the throne,
He still was favoured through the whole to move
Their admiration, gratitude, and love ;

And far more fitted, court and kingdom saw,
To sway the sceptre, and dispense the law ;
To grace the throne, with counsel most sedate,
And wisely guide the weighty helm of state.
Saul thus perplex'd, began his schemes anew,
To art, to guile, and stratagem he flew ;
“ These fail,” said he, “ but others I will try,
And to the chance of doubtful battles fly,
For there some dart, wing'd from a favouring bow,
May prove his end—and end with him my woe,
By which I may my hand from death restrain,
And yet completely such a riddance gain.”
To war he turns ;—and just as far succeeds
As brings fresh honours on the hero's deeds.

Two daughters had the king, and right of one
Belonged to David for his service done ;
A public contract unfulfill'd by Saul,
In due requital for Goliath's fall ;
But now this recompense he brings to view,
In hostile dangers David to renew,
To whom at last, as if in generous will,
He owns the right, and will that right fulfil.
Hence he contracts, if David will but fight
The adverse hosts with all courageous might,
In deeds of prowess keep alive alarm,
And break the vigour of the pagan arm ;
He will on him his eldest child bestow,
And in fair Merab all his claim allow.

This sure was favour of superior kind,
And yet not grateful to the hero's mind.
This maid had not his close attachment moved,
It was the younger he admired and loved,
Who on her part had not in secret seal'd
A tender passion which a blush reveal'd.
This lively nymph by deep impression warms,
And oft he wanders o'er her lovely charms ;
As well he might, for in her face was seen
The placid smile, and in her air—the queen ;
While in each sphere in which she had to move,
Love she excited, for she lived in love.

Propitious change ! (such turns there are in life !)
For Merab now becomes another's wife !
By schemes and whims, unstable as the wind,
The wavering Monarch changed his fickle mind,
And, by his absolute parental sway,
Consign'd her thus, perhaps unwill'd, away ;
While David at the turn was well content,
And joy'd in secret at the kind event,
Beholding now that if he may have one,
His dearest Michal it will be—or none.
The mutual passion in the two had been
Amongst the courtiers evidently seen,
Who now to Saul the tender news impart,
Union to urge of hand, as well as heart.

The king received it with a look benign,
But smother'd in his smile a dark design,

And thoughts like these : " I will not now forbear,
But grant the damsel to become his snare ;
He shall, to gain her, in unequal strife
Engage superior power and risk his life;
Yes, I will now again to battle fly,
And, all arranged in safer order, try,
Where may some bow a poisoned arrow send,
To crown my wish, and all my sorrows end."
Terms he proposed—and David to fulfil
The proposition, met the royal will.

No less were these than, ere a certain day,
He should one hundred of the Pagans slay,
And bring a proof, if he should so succeed,
Before the blessing crown'd the venturous deed.
Thus he must now take up offensive arms,
And fight through blood to gain his Michal's
 charms ;

Terms not ungrateful, for by such a strife
He show'd his ardour to obtain his wife ;
And females like it not in suitors' eyes,
To yield unpurchased, and too cheap a prize,
Still more in her, (so high in rank to be,)
To stoop to one of such a low degree.

He went—he fought—successful was his cause,
And death was doubled on the heathen foes.
Elate, he back return'd with cheering pride,
Tho' doubly doubtful to obtain his bride,
For in the king he knew it would destroy,
Rather than prove an animating joy,

Since he returned alive with added fame,
And with such views of recompense to claim :
Yet to his word Saul due observance paid,
And granted him the captivating maid,
In pride, as honor, did the grant fulfil,
Though much opposed to his ill-govern'd will.
Thus great reward to David now succeeds,
For love and honours crown his prosperous deeds.

The globe roll'd on, when the returning light
Broke forth again successive to the night,
O'er Palestine diffused its early ray,
Arousing mortals to enjoy the day ;
A welcome time, which so auspicious proved
As join'd our hero to the maid he loved.

The nuptial morn thus brightly usher'd in,
The bustling scenes throughout the court begin ;
A royal feast attends the marriage rites,
And every heart in general joy delights ;
E'en sullen Saul, as wines upon him steal,
Feels transient mirth, and thinks the pleasure real,
For now well-fill'd the silver vases shine,
While golden goblets deal the sparkling wine,
And music adds, as nimble fingers play,
Exhilaration to the jovial day.
Thus, after many a check, and doubt and fear,
All they surmount, with pleasing views to cheer,
And on this day in consummation prove
A happy union in the bonds of love.

Prospects now flatter, and to David rise,
Like an ascending sun through spotless skies ;
But ah ! how oft, before the vivid light,
Clouds intervene as with the shades of night !
So proved it here ;—ere bliss was long enjoy'd,
The cup of pleasure was with pain alloy'd.

Fresh deeds of war now rose from pagan strife,
That e'en of thousands cut the thread of life,
For these proud infidels, once more, again
Their camps erected on a spacious plain ;
E'en all their princes gather'd from afar,
And brought their quotas to the general war.
Roused by reverses, and their Hero's fall,
Through David's conquests, and the arms of Saul,
Retaliation now they breathe, and boast
Of dealing vengeance on the Hebrew host,
When their swoln armies spreading wide and far,
Form a dire aspect in the field of war.

David must now give up his bridal charms,
To face the fury of this horde in arms.
His troops he raised, prepared with eager might
For king and country all opposed to fight,
But not like them, with vain assuming boasts,
For his dependence is " the Lord of Hosts."

Just at the dappling of the dawning light
He rose, all anxious, from a thoughtful night ;
Aroused to arms—graced with his studded shield,
And with his forces faced th' embattled field.

Soon the loud clang is heard as troops engage ;
The shields are flourished, and the javelins rage ;
The Jews, all-vigorous, deal their vengeance far,
And send around their missile bolts of war,
When soon, behold, their foes defeated yield,
And with lost honour quit th' ensanguin'd field,
While these victorious, in reward of toil,
Are recompensed with golden heaps of spoil.

Such gallant deeds repeated o'er and o'er,
Advanced their leader higher than before ;
The rescued nation knew not how to raise
Their gratulations to his worth of praise ;
E'en lively girls, and many a Hebrew dame,
Again with music his great deeds proclaim,
Exalting him to honour's highest post,
While Saul is nearly in their fervour lost.

As smothered flax, when hidden sparks remain,
May soon to raging flames burst forth again,
So thus with envious Saul, whose latent ire
Again re-kindled with increase of fire,
For when he saw the youth's achievement yield
Such brilliant honours in the martial field,
And him return (so late a shepherd swain)
Midst songs and plaudits to the court again,
He could not brook it, but now overcome,
Increased his rankling hate, and brooding gloom,

Perplex'd at schemes thus baffled o'er and o'er,
Device seem'd fruitless, and he tried no more,
Nearly convinced that a controlling power
Success, defeated in each flattering hour,
And that the youth, as Samuel had shown,
Was thus advancing to possess the crown.

At such deep wounding views, Saul felt the smart
Of festering horrors to convulse the heart.
Work'd to the highest pitch, he now no more
Tries to conceal as he had done before,
But, reigning king despotic of the land,
He orders David's death with prompt command ;
His son and servants bids the youth to kill ;—
He spoke !—'twas law—and who dare check
his will ?

Yet, shock'd at such a base, unjust decree,
All feel as one ; they all as one agree,
And now for once, though hazardous, delay ;
Withstand compliance ; silent, disobey ;
Will not for him, though chief and king he stood,
Imbue their hands in unoffending blood.

Well may the mind conceive what this would
bring,
What rage transport the disappointed king,
And add (if it could add) malignant ire
To burn more furious with outrageous fire.

Here Jonathan stood mute, o'ercome with fear,
While secretly starts up the trembling tear :

A crowd of thoughts rush on him, but all tend
T' arrest the action, and to save his friend.
A friendship seldom parallel'd on earth
Glows in his breast to ward the stroke of death,
By any means, with promptitude to stay
His father's rashness, and his rage allay ;
But seeming then in vain to try to find
Access to plead, and tranquillize his mind,
He left him so, but with a heart of pain,
That, unopposed, his wrath might cool again.

What joy would sparkle many a prince's eye,
When a known rival was condemned to die !
But nobler here, the heir preserveth one
To take his rank, and fill the royal throne !

Retiring from the king, the faithful youth
Bears to his friend the voice of naked truth ;
In sad dejection tells the mournful tale,
While feelings almost make his utterance fail ;
For hard the task his father to expose !
Yet death was threaten'd, and he must disclose.
A scene of grief !—David o'erwhelm'd appears,
Nor heals the wounds by copious floods of tears ;
Nor least his pain to see the suffering youth
Unbosom thus a deeply trying truth,
Yet he was pleased amidst the griefs to find
Such noble friendship, and so firm a mind.

Great was their strait, and mutual feelings deep ;
Yet not a season to delay and weep,

For they must now their active thoughts engage
On present safety from the threatening rage,
Lest Saul himself, or some assassin, speed
With hasty step to perpetrate the deed.
Then soon they fix, that till another day,
David at distance shall sequester'd stay ;
In some untrodden spot, unknown to light,
Pass the dull moments of the tedious night,
While the young prince his father's mind shall
 sound,
And to the bottom probe the grievous wound,
Using each tender and persuasive art,
To soften rancour, and assuage his heart.

The plan thus laid, they parted, sore oppress'd,
While each the other at the parting bless'd.
Into a rugged rock, where arching stone
Was clad with brambles and offensive thorn,
Through which the lamp of night could never
 gleam,
Nor lively lustre of a solar beam,
David all-musing went, the night to spend,
Without the comfort of a soothing friend,
But ruminating on the things to come
Whilst the drear cavern nourished up his gloom.

Meanwhile the prince, with anxious thoughts
 and pain,
Moves pensive back along the silent plain ;

BOOK II.

53

Unto the court with perturbation goes,
And to the field his angry father draws,
Where, by mild means, and with a filial awe,
He tried from him the latent cause to draw,
Why such aversion could so heated rise
To one whose merits they should highly prize.
Obtain'd in measure :—then to calm the ire,
He thus address'd his irritated sire :
“ If youthful reasoning ere might age assail,
O royal father ! let a son prevail,
A son in grief, and witness unto woes ;
Ah ! suffer him to plead in David's cause,
Speak what is just, and by that justice won,
Gain thee to treat him as a worthy son,
For he deserves it, and may then thine eyes
Be clear to see it, and his worth to prize ;
For did he not, subservient night or day,
To cheer thy spirits all his powers display
Did he not venture, ere thou gav'st the call,
And gained the conquest by the giant's fall,
Inspired thy armies wonders to display,
When sunk in terrors, and in great dismay ?
And ever since, a warrior at command,
Has raised his ensign to protect the land,
In which success has crown'd thy royal car
With matchless triumphs in the field of war.
Nor less was he, when wars were brought to cease,
In every service in the times of peace ;
Yea, ever ready at thy beck to run ;
A faithful subject and a duteous son.

Of such an one how canst thou entertain
A thought of injury, or to have him slain?
Nay, tempt not Heaven, by such a dreadful crime,
To blast thy blessings, and cut short thy time.
Offend not so that God that raised thee high,
And made thy throne the chief beneath the sky;
Who placed thee here in such supreme command
To rule uprightly, and to bless the land.
Ah, mayst thou rather, in deep reverence bow'd,
Return due thanks for favours so bestow'd,
Esteem the agent in the blest employ,
And all around with gratitude enjoy;
Then thou mayst hope thy comforts to restore,
While to each blessing will be added more;
And when the time of thy sojourn is run,
The best of blessings to be then begun.
Such is my prayer; and happy shall I be
All these to witness realized in thee."

Such tender language and convincing truth
Brought o'er the father to the pleading youth:
His anger softened;—and when well assuaged,
He for the future by an oath engaged,
And in retraction firmly did ordain,
"As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain."
A happy change, if faithfully maintain'd;
But short the time this brittle bond remain'd.

The prince, elated at such good success,
Now flies, the bearer of the news express,

Calls David from the cavern where he lies,
While e'en he thinks more placid seem the skies;
But ere to speak his cheering voice essay'd
His altered features what he bore convey'd,
For gratulations with strong feelings hung
Full from the heart upon the ready tongue.

The whole that pass'd he now rehearses o'er,
And deems his father friendly as before,
Not doubting but he spoke his genuine will,
And that his conduct would the whole fulfil.

As one condemned unjustly joys to hear
A grateful pardon sounding in his ear,
Such was the case with David, thus to gain
Sentence revoked that doom'd him to be slain,
And not be pardoned only, but restored
To former state with his relenting lord.
And as in grief they both alike became,
So better moments found them still the same;
Here then they felt as one, without alloy,
A sweet release, and animating joy.
Firmly believing that the rage was o'er,
In Saul they trusted as they did before;
And being thus relieved from anxious pain,
Were soon re-settled in the court again.

Once more thus quench'd the fierce impassioned
flame,
The welcome moments gently flew and came,

Domestic comforts seemed throughout to flow,
And kind oblivion buried all their woe :
When, as before, the lately banished man
To play his harp before the king began,
That when his spirits droop'd he might impart
All he could render to revive the heart.
Blest might ye thus remain ! but, sad to tell,
The bliss soon vanished, and the music fell.

Philistine powers again, in restless rage,
Began invasion, and fresh war to wage.
Hence David now must face them in the field,
Throw down the lyre, and raise the fencing shield,
The peaceful music of the court give o'er
For the shrill trumpet, and the clarion's roar.
A dreadful scene came on ;—the arrows flew
And countless numbers of the Pagans slew,
When, lost to hope, their chief in heartfelt pain
Grounded his spear to quit the hostile plain :
He darts away in galling grief of mind,
Nor turns to see the direful work behind,
Self-preservation now alone his aim,
And paramount to every sense of shame,
For such the conflict that the conquer'd foe
Laid in wide carnage on the plains below :
But ah recoil !—and let a veil display
Shades o'er the slaughter of that fatal day.

This conquest gained through David's chief
command,
It raised him still on higher ground to stand ;

He more and more the pride of all became,
Nor spared they honours to increase his fame;
But these brought their alloy, for envious Saul,
Finding no hazards would produce his fall,
But that each splendid act and enterprize
Still raised his greatness in the people's eyes;
And viewing too that favours had so run
As brought him near his throne—to be his son;
His eyes, though dim, were opened now to see
What had occurred, and what, alas! might be,
On such a view, Saul saw it clearly shown,
That he might tremble for his tottering crown.

These strongly pictured to his brooding mind,
While to best interest he was void and blind,
Hood-winked he pass'd from erring still to err,
And paths of darkness to the light prefer.
Because his deeds bore not the search of light
He tried to keep them from the proof of sight;
But vain the shift!—there is an eye can see,
And retribution is laid up for thee.
Ah foolish man! how loth to seek to find
What would restrain and would restore the mind,
Correct thy devious steps, so falsely trod,
And reconcile to an offended God.
Good times have been, but now the season's o'er;
Thy day's sinn'd out, and thou art blest no more,
But left unto thyself to grope in night,
And what belongs to peace hid from the sight!

Thus left, and lost, and darken'd, Saul is still.
A slave devoted to his rabid will ;
He then resolves again to slay his son
And end a rival ere too near the throne ;
But vain th' attempt had been, and now again
It proved abortive, and as fully vain.

As a lone traveller who is wont to have
His rest at times beneath some rugged cave,
Who once escaped when a suspended rock
In shattered ruins fell, with awful shock,
Yet still oft takes his rest within a shade,
By some impending craggy arches made,
Thinks himself safe, and yet his late surprise
Gives frequent cause to cast up jealous eyes ;
Such was the case with David ;—all was o'er,
And safety seeming as it was before ;
Yet his escape would oft across him fly,
To cause an instant and a jealous eye.
This proved his preservation, for he found
By it the means to shun a fatal wound ;
For though a Heavenly hand, another way,
By measures more direct, could quickly stay,
Yet thus from second causes oft' succeed,
Some blest prevention, or important deed.

Early one day, as horizontal light
Drove to the west the moving shades of night,
The wearied king rose from his downy bed,
Where gloomy dreams had fill'd his floating head,

Call'd his musician to his former play
To chase the visions of the night away;
But mere pretence—not music to renew,
Death was the object that he had in view ;
For, soon as David at his music stood
The King surveyed him in a sullen mood,
Then quick upstarts, while vengeance mark'd his
brow,

To give a final and decisive blow.
Forth from his hand now flies a chosen dart
With his best aim to penetrate the heart,
But David's ready eye, and watchful ear,
By rustling garments, found the danger near,
And when by glance the dark design he found,
He slipt aside and shunn'd the threatened wound.
The weapon miss'd, but came so fierce from Saul,
As fix'd it trembling in the injured wall.

The lyrist now, the music leaving, flew,
And bade the court a long and last adieu :
To peaceful quarters and a loving wife
He fled to shelter an endanger'd life ;
Where to his Michal, with a heavy heart,
He tells how nearly they had been to part ;
Who in the grief unites, and sheds her tears,
Mourns for the father—for her husband fears ;
But firm and ardent in unaltered love,
Nor king nor parent her adherence move,
For, through the whole of all conflicting strife,
She acts the tender and the faithful wife.

Vexed worse and worse at his frustrated will,
The royal ruffian vow'd his vengeance still,
And now more callous grown, at close of day,
He bids his servants go and David slay :
“Go to his house,” the furious monarch said,
“Obey my voice, and bring the traitor's head.”

The evening came, as solar light withdrew,
And o'er the land its shadowy mantle threw,
When some, obsequious to their orders, go
Yet with reluctance and with signs of woe ;
But Saul had spoke !—'twas death to disobey,
And his dire aspect threatened for delay !

All now was still, and David lull'd to rest
On Michal's circling arm and soothing breast,
When her attentive ear perceived a tread,
Which roused her feelings, and excited dread :
She gave th' alarm ; and David told in fear
That dangers threatened, and were very near ;
That, life to save, he must abruptly fly
By quick escape beneath the favouring sky.

At this his courage flamed—his spirit rose
To prompt his arm to venture and oppose,
To make th' assassins, in their mission, feel
A recompense from his defending steel ;
But Michal's tears, in suppliant strain, assail,
And sweetly o'er his martial haste prevail.

He dropt the thought; then due attention paid
To her suggestions, and contrivance made,
Which now at once the favour'd means afford,
To shun the ruffians, and to save her lord.

The stars were hid, a pitchy darkness spread,
And weary mortals wrapt in slumbers laid;
The men not seen, nor seeing—or not there,
The thoughtful Michal plies her active care;
A private window opens, void of sound,
Whence ropes are fixed descending to the ground.
By these the faithful wife, with watchful ear,
Lets down her husband with a trembling fear,
While from her breast a sigh steals forth its flight
Amidst the stillness of the solemn night.

David escaped amidst the silent gloom
In anxious fears, and pondering what might come :
O'er pathless ground, through thorns and briars
 stray'd,
T' elude the sight, and all pursuit evade,
But knew not where in all the world to find
A place of rest to his bewilder'd mind.
One place presents—another soon is brought,
While others crowd and rack his harass'd
 thought,
Yet none seem right—none fix with him as sure
To shield his head, and prove a rest secure ;
At last on Ramah turn'd his final view,
Fairest in hope of any part he knew ;

To Ramah then his steps laborious bend,
Where Samuel dwelt, his never-failing friend.

Now from the east appear'd the early dawn,
And softly flowing brought the dappled morn,
When came the time intended for the stroke,
Quick to dispatch him, ere, perhaps, awoke.
The servants knock'd ;—obedient to the call
The mistress waited on the spies of Saul,
Who, as in peace, and for good purpose come,
Mildly inquired, “if David was at home ?”
She answered quick, “My husband is in bed,
Borne down with sickness, and an aching head.”

The guards relieved, now back returning, went
To carry tidings of the kind event,
Supposing they should now release obtain
From such an errand of so foul a stain ;
But not so freed ;—for their vindictive lord
An answer thus unto his vassals roar'd :
“Return, ye disobedient !—bring the bed,
And him, the sleeper with the aching head :
Begone !—in haste—that I the stroke may give,
For such a traitor has no right to live !”

Astonish'd at the charge, the servile train
Beat back their footsteps to the house again,
And, not to manners or court-usage bred,
Push to the chamber to attack the bed,

In haste preparing, fearful of delay,
To bear their object and the bed away !
But, strange to tell ! when they their work began,
The man was but the likeness of a man !
For, in the place from whence the chief had fled,
An image only, occupied the bed ;
The scheme and act of an assiduous wife,
To screen her husband, and to save his life.

The ruffian strangers now thus duped and freed,
And somewhat chagrin'd at the artful deed,
Return'd again to meet their master Saul,
With doubtful spirits to relate the whole.

Meanwhile, the king, on expectation borne,
Impatient, waited for the men's return,
Who now arrive, and discomposed, express
Their second failure, as they Saul address.
They briefly said that, searching all around
An image only in the bed they found :
That David in the dark from home had stray'd ;
And it was Michal who the tricks had play'd.

The madden'd king, once disappointed more,
Grew worse (if that could be) than heretofore :
His daughter's art, and tender scheming care,
After he gave her to be David's snare,
Provoked his honour ;—yes, he deem'd it vile
To be o'ercome—and by a woman's wile !

Then to his child in furious rage he ran,
And sternly thus to her in tears began:
“What hast thou done? a crime the worst of all,
To mock thy Sovereign, and thy father, Saul!
And in disloyalty to freedom give
To one unworthy in the land to live!
Nay, 'tis a parent doom'd the grief to know,
Or life for life for such a deed should go!”

The trembling daughter, while adown her
cheek

The tears ran copious, thus attempts to speak:
“O! blame not me for what this day I've done,
But clear thy daughter, and condemn thy son.
Was it not better to perform his will
Than rashly suffer by his brandish'd steel?
Self-preservation is in nature strong,
And if I yielded was I doing wrong?
And yet consider in what place I stand,
How strait to move, and err on neither hand,
For both are near;—a father I've in thee;
In him a husband close attach'd to me.
Consider then, and calm thy sudden glow,
Cast off thy own, and ease thy daughter's woe;
Forgive the deed, if tears and prayers can move,
And let me still enjoy a father's love.”

She gain'd her point;—for thus in tears and
mild,
It touch'd his feelings for a weeping child.

The father was appeased ; and when become
More calm, he left her, and returned home.

Though Michal was forgiv'n, yet keen in
mind,
Saul turns again his wandering son to find,
On whom his thoughts with envy never cease,
But rob his life of every hour of peace.
They occupy him each succeeding day,
And dim the lustre of the solar ray,
Or in his slumbers form nocturnal dreams,
In mimic actions and romantic schemes ;
For, as the restless heaving oceans roll,
So ceaseless passions toss the monarch's soul.

Thus Saul's affairs ;—while David lonely trod
The path direct to where the Seer abode.
Arrived at Ramah, there he Samuel meets,
And as a father and a brother greets ;
With whom he now consults, and tells him all
That he is suffering at the hand of Saul.
The reverend prophet, at the sad disclose,
Sighs with his friend, and dips into his woes,
Kindly considering where, in present hour,
To place the wanderer free from threats and
power.

Nath presents, as certain there to find
A true asylum for an injured mind,
For sure, he thinks, beneath the sacred dome,
Wrath dare not e'en in royalty to come,

This ponder'd, and resolved, without delay,
They onward bent their solitary way :
To Naioth travell'd on the youth and sage,
Where wisdom dwelt in reverential age,
And there, with prophets peaceful and sincere,
Join'd the pure Church relieved from anxious
fear,
Where in sweet fellowship they worship paid,
Old Samuel station'd as their honour'd head.
Blest school of saints ! a union here on earth
Link'd—and to reign beyond the bounds of death.

Sweet, but short peace !—for flying news ere
long

Reaches Saul's ear by some invidious tongue,
Swelling the tale that David was become
Himself a prophet, and there fix'd at home.
The Monarch thus inform'd, in wrathful mood
And haste, pursued th' infernal work of blood ;
But unavailing, for now foil'd again,
He toil'd with ardour, but he toil'd in vain.
Quickly he chose from his domestic crew
Those well adapted to the deed in view.
And soon dispatch'd them, with all speed to bring
The pre-judged culprit there to face his king.

These in obedience went,—but here the hand
Of David's God annull'd the King's command,
And interposed, most evident to all,
Betwixt his chosen and the wrath of Saul.

When to the place the servants boldly came
And saw the prophets in religious frame,
Some prophesying, others deeply bound
In adoration, though unheard in sound,
A quick, spontaneous, and resistless Power,
By them unwitness'd till that signal hour,
Entrancing seized, as when in mind and frame
They like the prophets in their deeds became,
The same in words, in actions, and in mien,
Reluctant captives in the holy scene.

Of this Saul heard, then sent another band
Of dauntless veterans with his strict command ;
But as the former, so alike are they,
Bound by restraint, that they unwill'd obey ;
And prophesying in that changeful hour,
Amazed, they wonder at so strange a power.

These not returning too, fresh choice was made,
Their orders given ; and Saul thus sternly said :
“ Go ! and return ! Go—execute my will,
Or disobedience shall my vengeance feel !”
They went, resolved to execute the whole,
To shun the wrath, and favour gain of Saul,
And not like those, the former men he sent,
Who had so loiter'd, careless of th' event.
But strange deception ! when, approaching near,
They saw the band in solemn acts appear,

The former influence seized upon the whole,
Changed every tongue, and chain'd the power
of Saul ;

That even these, so anxious to fulfil,
Moved not a finger to perform his will,
But, like the former, rest composedly here,
Forget their master, nor his anger fear.

For these, in flattering hope the whole to bring,
All is impatience with the restless king :
He looks, and waits—he waits, and looks again,
But all is blank, and every look in vain,
For none return to gratify his view,
Nor for detention any reason show ;
Then wild he storms, vows vengeance against all
Who dare thus dally, and frustrate his call.

Enraged beyond all bounds, he now must go
Himself to deal the oft-defeated blow.
He arms !—then onward bends his hostile way,
Big with his views, and spurning at delay.
At Sechu now arrived the violent king,
Where coolly gurgles a refreshing spring,
And near this fount a travelling man he meets,
Whom with a question he abruptly greets,
“Where David and the prophets then abode ?”
Quick he return'd, “At Naioth still, my lord.”
Great news confirm'd, which whet the edge of
strife,
And urged him on with renovated life ;

When as he forward thus elated sped,
Unnumber'd sending to the silent dead,
Enjoying all secure, so near at hand,
When wrath should feast, and victims stain the
land,

Behold, alas! o'er royalty now came
Unusual feelings, and a change of frame!
A sweet composure o'er him gently steals,
And every wound that rack'd his bosom heals.
His fervid blood that wrought in every vein,
Now softly flows, and mildly cools the pain;
His rolling eyes that flash'd with angry fire,
Now easy motion in their use acquire;
Each hostile thought is lull'd, so wont to rove,
And all is peace, and innocence, and love;
While mental vision, freed from filmy sight,
Expands and roves o'er objects of delight,
And makes the soul in rapture to adore;
For all seems heaven to what it felt before.

Thus calm Saul moved, and far as power he
had,

Amazed, and wonder'd how the change was made,
But now no more his stubborn will can rule,
Become a pupil in the prophets' school,
Where his offended God, without control,
Chain'd down the freedom of his captive soul,
And made the wretch, who came intent on blood,
Forget his errand, and reverse his mood.

Brought him from fury, unresisting, o'er,
To bow in dust, to honour and adore ;
For thus o'er-ruled, at sight of Samuel now
He casts his robes, and lies in ashes low ;
Now prophesying—next in silence laid,
While warm devotions seem to fill his head.
Thus the remainder of the day he spent,
His garments lying all around and rent,
And the succeeding night thus pronely laid,
'Till light again its morning visit paid.

While thus devout by force, th' intruder's time
Past peaceful on, without th' intended crime,
The rescued David, overcome, adored,
For all these favours, his all-gracious Lord,
Who thus, through timely interposing care,
Was pleased from harm his helpless one to spare,
And show to all his over-ruling power,
By signal means in that eventful hour.

Then, having ask'd the counsel of his friends,
Thankful he Naioth leaves, and homeward bends,
With quicken'd step proceeds, for thoughts of
home
Revive the comforts underneath his dome.
Arrived—to Michal he must first relate
The favours witness'd, and his present state ;
Then to his brother and dear friend he goes,
To count his blessings, and depict his woes,

To whom he opens the oppressive whole
Renew'dly suffer'd from the hand of Saul;
And from the aspect of the clouds that lower,
He questions thus the young viceroy in power:
"Say, O my friend! what mighty crimes I do?
And why pursued thus like a hunted roe?
What have I done, that I am doom'd to feel
Th' inflicting vengeance of thy father's steel?"
The youth replied: "Think not of such a deed,
And heaven forbid it that my friend should bleed!
But I know every project;—in the whole
I am consulted, and he tells me all;
For his affairs lie open to my view,
The past occurrence, and intention new;
And of such purpose he designs on thee,
I'm unacquainted, nor the dangers see,
And silence would be strange;—it then appears
Thou art too hasty in thy many fears."

Cool seem'd this speech, from that mild-
temper'd tongue
On which so oft the voice of kindness hung;
Yet David well consider'd, that in truth
He knew the father better than the youth;
And to imprint this knowledge on the son,
A sacred oath he took, and thus begun:
"In solemn manner facts I now declare,
To thee, my brother, and thy father's heir.
'Tis surely hard a parent's fault to hear,
But dangers prompt me;—'tis the spur of fear.

Then know—thy father has so much inclined
To mark our friendship with a jealous mind,
That if such secrets he reposed in thee,
He would conclude them sent direct to me,
For he might judge that, to the latest breath,
Our friendship, at all risks, would save from death.
Then shortly hear the total sum of all,
From one unperjured, of thy father Saul,
And grant it, if a remedy there be,
‘ For one step only is ’twixt death and me ! ’ ”

The prince confounded stood to hear the tale,
And see such anguish o’er his friend prevail,
And this in one not wont to feign or fear,
Brought home conviction to his heart and ear.
Thus in his sire deceived, that thought o’ercame
His filial breast, and stung with grief and shame,
While for his brother and his dearest friend,
His sorrows gather, and his bosom rend ;
When sighs, half smother’d in their progress,
hung,
To check the freedom of his trembling tongue.
A pause ensued ; when silence loudly spoke ;
But soon that silence he thus plaintive broke :
“ The keenest sorrow that a son can find
I feel in full to hear my father’s mind.
I have no room to doubt ;—I credit all
Thy declarations on my father Saul ;
And oh ! my thoughts for thee, my brother—friend,
Confuse my reason, and my feelings rend !

How can I act?—O tell me what to do!
But only ask, and glad I will bestow."

Freed from restraint by language so humane,
David resumed, and thus return'd again :
"Since with such generous views thou hast been
kind,

I will disclose what occupied my mind :
As I from Naioth came, with sorrows torn,
And meditating on my case forlorn,
A quick contrivance in my musings rose,
Which, in submission, I to thee propose :
To morrow is new moon, when I should fare
At our great feast, and occupy my chair ;
Then let me not to rank at table come,
But first absent, and keep myself from home.
When miss'd, the king will turn his thoughts
on me,

And how he bears it thou wilt quickly see :
For if his words do not, his looks betray
The lurking ills that in his bosom lay.
This let me ask, still further for our use,
To plead in favour, as a fair excuse,
To let me go unto my native plain,
Where living all my relatives remain ;
To Bethlehem visit—notice how they fare,
And join the feasts now celebrating there ;
For at this time our families unite,
Performing yearly a religious rite,

This tell thy father ;—further let him know,
That asking this thou gavest thy leave to go.
Then if he say, “’Tis well,” without a frown,
It will convince that he is peaceful grown ;
But if he answer in a tone severe,
And florid flushes in his face appear,
They will in proof, to thy conviction, rise,
That yet the rancour in his bosom lies.”

The prince replied : “I like the plan for
thee,
And it will yield a certainty to me ;
And ah, may such a proof most grateful prove,
To be a change to settlement and love !
But nice indeed these things to me appear,
As they must come not to my father’s ear ;
And here we know not who is lurking laid,
With ear attentive ;—we may be betray’d.
Then let us to the open fields repair,
Where we in converse may a freedom share,
And listeners cannot with us interfere,
To gather matter for the royal ear.

This said—they go, the subject there renew,
And fully settle all they held in view,
When, by a mutual covenant, they both
Confirm attachment by a sacred oath,
A friendship fix’d, to last through every stage,
Down from the sire to son, from age to age.

This compact form'd—next David ask'd to know,
“What means should tell him how the matters
go?”

The prince replied : “Retire unknown to all;
While I commune thus with my father Saul ;
Then unobserved at proper season come
To yonder cave, and learn thy future doom :
If favours be thy lot, this token know,
Some arrows I will shoot, both near and low ;
But if sent far, and whizzing o'er thy head,
Conclude, in sorrow, that enough I said.
But lest the arrows catch nor ear nor eye,
I will direct aloud to where they lie ;
And only these observe, and they shall prove
My father's hatred, or return of love.”

David well-pleased, with faltering words
expressed,
And trembling lips, some feelings of his breast,
But much remained, which he could not impart,
Imprest as graven on a grateful heart.

The prince, as oft before, so now again,
Shared in the feelings of so keen a pain ;
Admired the patience paramount o'er all,
That kept him faithful to his sovereign Saul,
While such firm virtues on the sufferer's part,
Confirmed th' attachment he possess'd at heart.

They parted now ;—when in a mood forlorn
David withdrew, and mourning went alone :
The prince, with thoughtful mien and heavy heart,
Sigh echoed to his friend's in grief to part.

END OF BOOK THE SECOND.

D A V I D.



Book the Third.

ARGUMENT.

Saul returned.—David is absent at the feast on the first and second days, when Saul enquires the cause.—At Jonathan's reply, Saul, after a rough speech, orders David to be fetched for death, and throws a javelin at the same time at his son.—An affecting interview between Jonathan and David; after which David goes to Nob.—His false tale there to the priests, where he receives assistance.—He goes from thence an exile to Achish for protection.—Being recognised by the king's servants, he feigns madness, and is sent away.—He goes to Adullam, and lives in a cave, where he is resorted to by his kindred and others.—He goes to the king of Moab, to request his acceptance and protection of his parents while under his difficulties, and obtains it.—The prophet Gad pays him a visit, and orders him to go to Judah.—Saul under the tree at Ramah harangues his servants for their conduct to him respecting David.—Doeg there accuses David and the prophets.—The prophets are sent for by Saul, and by his order eighty-five of them are slain by Doeg. The city of the prophets, and the country around, are also put to the sword.

DAVID.

Book the Third.

The sun now rose bright from its eastern bed,
And tipt the cedars with a glow of red ;
The marble palace glitter'd to the sight,
And golden turrets blazed with vivid light.
Th' officious servants, and the cooks in haste,
Prepare the dainties for the lunar feast,
For which the deer, the lamb, and timid hare,
Have bled their last to grace the sumptuous fare.

Saul was return'd, who, in relapse of mind,
Had left the prophets and his zeal behind ;
For all renew'd again, his passions glow
With equal rage to execute the blow,
Anticipating, with elated breast,
That David will not miss the royal feast ;
For though he fear'd, yet, with such numbers
near,
He would conclude there was no room for fear ;

And never had he ever dared before
To shun the banquet, or to miss the hour.
Thus big with hope, Saul now resolves, no
 shame
Nor people present shall defeat his aim,
For he will strike at once a fatal blow,
And send him promptly to the shades below.

Saul seats himself within his splendid chair,
And the rest following range at feast to share.
First comes his son to take his usual place,
And captain Abner next the board to grace ;
The rest in course : Saul looks for David too,
With lowering aspect and a wrinkled brow.
Fruitless suspense !—he glances round with pain,
But looks and frowns in silence and in vain.
No David still appear'd ;—nor ever more
Came in his presence as in times before.

Painful suspension ! yet, in silent mood,
Saul, by best efforts, his chagrin withstood.
Thus seal'd his tongue with thoughts intent to try
Another banquet with a patient eye ;
For David a long journey had to come,
O'er tedious road, ere he could reach his home,
And might, perhaps, some cross occurrence find
To cause delays and disappoint his mind ;
Or might arrive oppress'd, unwell, or late,
Unfit that season on the court to wait ;

Or, as unclean none at the feast must be,
He might be so, and hence an absentee.

That day's occurrence o'er, the downy bed
Received the monarch with an aching head,
For peace was lost ;—in restless state he lies,
While mocking objects in his slumbers rise ;
He dreams and wakes—awakes and dreams
again,

But all these visions only feed his pain ;
For though a grateful sight oft meets his eyes,
Yet the grasp fails him, and the phantom flies ;
That, sleeping or awake, alike he's toss'd,
His will frustrated, and his wishes cross'd ;
No David comes within his reach, to feel
Wounds from his language or his ardent steel.

At last the morning came in bright display,
And chased the shadows of the night away,
When the king rose as from a bed of woe,
And joyless eyed the oriental glow ;
For in all seasons, as they went and came,
His mind was chafed, and still in gloom the same.

The day advanced, when soon the feastful board
Again with viands is profusely stored,
Where now the king with anxious thoughts again
Awaits the moment, but awaits in vain ;
No David came to join th' assemblers round,
T' enjoy the dainties, or the music's sound,

But still was absent as the day before ;
Nor ever feasted with the monarch more.
Thus foil'd again, his frantic rage and pride
Saul could no longer in his bosom hide,
But agitated, soon he silence broke,
And thus, with quivering lips, in question spoke :
“ Why does this son of Jess' this day forbear
A second time to occupy his chair.”

The placid prince, who eyed with grief for long
The gathering storm that had portentous hung,
With filial awe and diffidence express'd,
In mildest accents thus his sire address'd :
“ May't please thee, father, and I soon can say
Why David's absent on this public day.
When late from home, thou left'st me here alone,
He craved a favour from the regent-throne,
To go some days unto his natal plain
Where many kindred still in life remain ;
To visit them, to notice how they fare,
And with the sacrificers take a share ;
For at this time, join'd in a holy rite,
And solemn feast, his families unite.
He ask'd it humbly, and I thought it best
To grant the favour of this small request.”

Thus meek the son, with gleam of hope, replied,
But, cautious, as he spoke, the monarch eyed,
When he beheld his frenzy, for now more
With rage he swell'd than he had done before ;

His eyes grew fiery, and they wildly roll'd,
 That all the workings of his bosom told ;
 When from his lips a tremulous answer broke,
 And thus in fury and confused he spoke :
 " Perverse, rebellious, thou ! I scorn—I shame—
 From such a son to hear a father's name !
 I know the league in which thou art combined,
 And thou wilt soon thy bitter error find,
 For 'tis his aim, and should excite thy fear,
 To wrest our rights, a diadem to wear ;
 And while he lives no safety can be known
 To king, to people, kingdom, or the crown.
 Go ! fetch him then ; nor let him justice fly ;—
 Death is his due, and he shall surely die !"

The suffering youth knew not what words to
 frame,
 For e'en the mildest only fed the flame.
 At last, with faltering tongue, confused and slow,
 He ventured thus in question more to know :
 " What then is David's guilt, I humbly crave,
 That thus thou doom'st him an untimely grave?"

Enough ;—for now renew'd to rapid pace,
 The blood rushed up, and swell'd the father's
 face ;
 His choler stifled him, and chained his tongue
 From uttering vengeance which upon it hung :
 He strove no more, but with convulsive arm
 A javelin snatch'd, and raised in all alarm,

Then from his hand, in spite of all around,
 He threw the dart, his precious son to wound;
 But Jonathan, who strict attention paid,
 And all the madness in the king survey'd,
 Had stood on guard;—he saw the rising hand,
 Then slipp'd aside, and miss'd the fatal wand.
 Indignant at the deed, he left the hall,
 Yet mourn'd in anguish for his father Saul,
 Who in his turpitude so far could go
 Against religion, moral right, and law.
 In vain for him the feastful board was stow'd,
 Or sparkling wines in golden vessels glow'd;
 In none of these restoring balm he found,
 To heal or to assuage his mental wound,
 But all were left untasted and refused,
 While thus in pensive mood he mourn'd and
 mused:

“Why was I born to see this woful day,
 When thus a parent seeks his son to slay?
 Why heir-apparent to a kingdom's crown
 In riches nurtured, and of high renown,
 If thus I'm doomed more piercing griefs to know
 Than any mortal in a state below?
 If so—these elevations only bring
 A keener suffering, and a sharper sting.

“But why such roving thoughts? be still, my soul!
 And let reflection have its due controul;
 For what am I?—like other mortals here,
 No right by nature to an higher sphere;

For with all men I came the same at birth,
A weeping infant ;—nor am more at death :
And what between ?—our states alike remain
In fellow-weakness, trials, toil, and pain.
Why then should I from these exemption claim,
Through empty riches and a sounding name ?
Forbid it Heav'n ! these wayward thoughts
subdue,

And turn my vision to a better view ;
Teach me aright to steer through adverse strife,
And treat with patience all the ills of life ;
For all who live, or high or low, must bear
In their sojourning an allotted share ;
And well when tending, or in slaves or kings,
To loose their shackles from terrestrial things,
Fixing their minds on objects that will last,
When all the conflicts of this world are past,
And in another sphere afford a rest,
For ever glorious and supremely blest.
Then let me cease to murmur or repine,
Nor think in trials none can equal mine,
But thank the Ruler of all heaven and earth,
For his regard to mortals here beneath,
In fixing thus the difference so small
Betwixt the monarch and the least of all.

“ Though trials change in nature and degree,
Yet what to thousands come—come not to me ;
What come to me as my allotted doom,
Come not to thousands, nor will ever come.

Though much they vary, yet probations fall
To every state, and are the lot of all.
Yes!—fairer still I see the gilded toys,
Ye fleeting pleasures, and ye fading joys,
For, under specious, unsubstantial show,
You often hide the heavy heart of woe.
Ah! what can you with all your pomp avail,
When sinking sorrows the weak mind assail?
Not all your pageantry can give relief,
Nor drive an atom from a mass of grief,
But rather add,—when expectation's cross'd
And in the grasp the flying phantom's lost.
Then, O my soul! retire, and hence depend
Upon a better and more certain friend:
Leave earth for heaven; to heaven submit thy
cause,
And on the arm of matchless might repose;
For all below are fluctuating things,
Alike to peasants, warriors, and kings;
To-day possess'd,—to-morrow life and all
May close together, and for ever fall:
But heavenly treasures are a bliss while here,
And bliss for ever in another sphere.

“ Yet—yet, to thee, my father, thoughts return
And make a son with tender feelings mourn,
And sure 'tis pardoned if for one so near
I heave the sigh, and drop the filial tear;
For oh! how keen remembrance touches me
To think of such obduracy in thee!

O could I raise to Heaven effectual prayer,
I would no ardour nor an effort spare,
That thou might'st now from all thy errors cease,
And study only what belongs to peace.
O ! may the Lord thy rancour far remove,
And free replenish with a fund of love;
Bend thy strong will submissively to stand,
In all obedience at his high command,
That in thy reign thou may'st his cause defend,
Live to his praise, and in his favour end."

Such his soliloquies amidst his woes,
Tending to reconcile and re-compose,
Yet hard they bore ;—hence, ere the day was fled,
He sought some comfort from an early bed ;
But still the horrid scene would often dart
With keen sensations on his wounded heart.
In wakeful musings hours were past away,
Till near the summons of another day ;
For now his father, then his brother, rose
To break the comfort of a night's repose ;
When soon as dawn first broke its dappled light,
And westward drove the vanquish'd shades of
night,

He rose all thoughtful for his friend oppress'd,
And left the mansion with an anxious breast ;
For now by dear experience well he knew,
That David's judgment of the king was true ;
Then, as pre-fix'd, with faltering step he goes
To give the signal, and events disclose.

A lad ran on before, and brush'd the dew,
To seek the arrows as they distant flew :
Come near the place, (where none the cause
could know,)

He exercised with sighs th' elastic bow,
When the fleet tokens took their airy speed,
The sad proclaimers of th' atrocious deed,
And over David's head high whizzing flew,
That spoke a language which too well he knew.
" Fetch those beyond thee sent to distant ground,"
The prince commands the boy, with sonorous
sound,

In voice extended, which he knew would go
Confirming tidings to the cave of woe.

The scatterd arrows in the quiver stored,
The boy in waiting took them from his lord,
With charge to straightly back again repair,
While in a walk he took the morning air.

The lad now gone—and still but early day
Too soon for man along the fields to stray,
The prince concludes, as it may private be,
Amidst his pains his sorrowing friend to see,
That from their mingled feelings, some relief
Might be experienced to their mutual grief.
Towards the rock he bends ; downcast he goes,
And finds his friend involved in equal woes.
Past power of speech with gratitude and pain,
David bow'd low his head, and bow'd again ;

He bow'd a third, and with it met the ground,
While Jonathan stood mute, in silence bound.
Recover'd from the maze in which he stood,
At last he found a vent—he wept a flood;
And thus, while streaming tears roll'd down his
face,

He clasp'd his favourite in a warm embrace.
They wept and kiss'd in undivided woe,
While down the cheek the briny currents flow :
Their tears thus mingling, as in griefs agreed,
'Till David did his royal friend exceed.
Pathetic scene !—effusions how sincere !
How firm !—how generous, dignified, and dear !
Love, which reverses never could estrange,
Nor turn of tide nor overturnings change.

A time now came, when they again must part,
And leave each other with an aching heart ;
When Jonathan, his friendship to renew,
Thus in endearments gives his last adieu :
“Go then in peace. May blessings ever shine
Upon thy future days, and all of thine ;
And may the Lord a righteous witness be
To all the love profess'd by thee and me ;
Which vows have seal'd to keep, and to descend
Down to our children till successions end.”

David o'ercome, some words unutter'd hung
Beyond expression on his trembling tongue ;

But they must part ;—they sep'rate now again,
And weeping wander o'er the dewy plain,
Pursuing different paths. Off David goes,
A lost itinerant, and without a cause ;
Whilst towards home (though not a home of rest)
The prince moves slowly with a loaded breast,
For threefold causes now his bosom rend,
Himself—his father—and his honoured friend.

As an attach'd and ever faithful wife,
The joy and comfort of her husband's life,
After a parting and a melting shock,
Ascends the summit of a sea-beat rock,
And eyes all-anxious, lest the storms prevail,
To toss the vessel and o'erpower the sail ;
While her loved partner, in like state of mind,
Casts many a look on all he leaves behind :
So part the two ;—thus as their paths divide
Each by the other is reluctant eyed.

David decides ;—but had he ponder'd all,
Paused strong in faith, and less in fear of Saul,
His feet, perhaps, might on that very day
Have been directed in a better way ;
But wandering forth desponding and in dread,
Bereft, he thought, of all-consoling aid,
No place, in haste and such a state, he saw
To which he could with speed or safety go ;
No place to hide his over-burden'd head
And quit a portion of his panic-dread.

Thus sore perplex'd; it prompts his mind to err,
And act a part the cause of deeds severe.

Oh rash, most fatal step ! what mortals are
When off their proper guard and watchful care !
For guiding his own steps he now proceeds
To stoop to subterfuge and desperate deeds.
To Nob, forlorn, his devious way he bends,
Where dwell the priests, his ever-constant friends ;
Ahimelech the chief, supreme in awe,
The great dispenser of the sacred law ;
Who would not then have left him dark and
blind,

If all in truth he had reveal'd his mind ;
But his deceptions and rash measures proved
The deaths of many whom he truly loved !
Unto the priest now David singly came
Without attendance, or his badge of fame,
Which the high pontiff mark'd, and with some
fear,
To see him thus so destitute appear ;
Then brief he question'd, in his just surprise,
From what great cause the circumstance could
rise.

A pinching strait our wanderer now is in,
And, ah ! unguarded he descends to sin.
It seems he saw, and reason had to fear,
A captious servant of his master's near,

Who was observed to all attention pay,
Ready to catch, and all the news convey,
From which he knew that every word that fell,
To Saul, with speed, the eager spy would tell,
Which might be wrested to the prophet's ill,
Should he, as for himself, obtain his will ;
Hence to elude, he feign'd his story strong,
That to the king the favours might belong.
His shift was this—and thus his specious tale,
Which, for himself, had every right to fail ;
That he came there on secret errand sent,
In haste, and previous to some great event,
To whom his king had said : “ Be sure to go
With all dispatch, and let no person know,
While different servants I shall place at will
What I design in concert to fulfil.”
“ In haste and hunger, then, on thee I call,
Charged with this mission of my master Saul ;
And if thou canst a craving mortal feed,
Be pleased to serve in such a case of need ;
Some of the loaves of bread beneath thy care
Grant for support, and for my journey spare.”

The cred'lous priest, won by so fair a tale,
Allows th' impostor o'er him to prevail,
And thus return'd : “ Sure I am kindly led
To grant the favour, and supply with bread ;
But none of common kind remains on hand,
None but the hallow'd can I now command ;

Yet as thy need seems urgently to call
I grant the boon to save my sovereign Saul."

This prompt relief increasing freedom gave
Another favour of the seer to crave ;
When he resumes : " Pray will thy store afford
Some needful arms, a sabre, spear, or sword ?
For in my haste, these I forgot to bring,
My speed so urgent to oblige the king."

Ahimelech again :—" Here we repose
Unknown to war, and unannoy'd by foes ;
Hence arms are useless ; none we keep to fight,
For we in concord and in peace delight :
One only sword is ours, which we retain,
The late Goliath's, by thy prowess slain,
Which ever since has been preserved with care,
An emblem treasured of that feat in war.
If that will do, can I the loan withstand,
As 'tis a trophy at the king's command ?"

This David pleased ;—he liked this weapon
won,
The glittering spoil, e'en better than his own :
Quick he accepted, and when thus relieved,
Departed thankful for the things received.

Equipp'd, behold him plodding on the road,
Toil'd with the cumber of his ponderous load,

Who thus surcharged, of lowly stature, bore
The largest weapon ever mortal wore.
Strange disproportion!—strange the choice he
made!

What eye beheld him, but amused surveyed?

Thus David traversed, who no peace could know
Within Saul's realms, prolific field of woe!
At last he fixes, after many a stand,
To seek more comfort in another land.
But, as one error often leads to more,
He, thus bewilder'd, adds to those before;
For now to Achish he directs his face,
The reigning king of the Philistine race.
Ah sad resource! to steer to Gath to find
In pagan friendship some relief of mind!
E'en from that power, which he had so withstood
In many a conflict in the field of blood.

Short was the stay within these bounds he made,
In hopes the tempest would ere long be laid;
Yet on precarious ground he rested here,
His welcome doubting with well grounded fear,
For soon the servants recognised the man,
When whispering terrors round their circle ran;
Hence, in the panic which the whole impress'd,
They thus their monarch in their dread address'd:
"May't please the king to lend a listening ear
While we approach, and frankly tell our fear.

Is not this man, who late to Achish came,
The Hebrew warrior far renown'd in fame?
Whose wondrous deeds, and magic-working arm,
Against our armies wrought such dread alarm,
Who, without sword, to our astonish'd view,
Our mighty champion, great Goliath, slew,
And drove our forces with a conquering hand
Disgraced before him, as a vanquish'd band,
And whom their matrons were rejoiced to raise
Ten times in songs above their Monarch's praise?
If so, indeed what safety can we know
In one by nation our establish'd foe,
Who soon by guile, as well as prowess, may
O'erthrow the state, and all in bondage lay?"
Interrogated thus, the king began
The stranger's person and his deeds to scan,
When David soon perceived, with quicken'd ear,
Their jealous actions, and disturbing fear,
While equal dread his boding thoughts assail'd,
Disturbed his rest, and day and night prevail'd.

No comfort finding here, he wish'd to leave;
Yet anxious still no great offence to give,
And that he might be rather sent than go,
He madness feign'd, that they might quit him so.
Fired were his looks, to roll his eyes began;
And down his beard his spattle drivelling ran;
He scratch'd the gates, defaced th' enamell'd doors,
And scribbled nonsense on the marble floors.

The king beheld, and with increase of fear
Convenes his servants his commands to hear ;
“ Do you not mark,” says he, “ the’ man you
dread

Become a maniac, and deranged his head !
You see him mad ;—and have we need of one
Of such description to approach the throne ?
Dispatch him then by my direct command,
To seek his quarters in another land,
That we no longer, to our terror, may
So great an object of disgust survey.”

Glad of the orders, quick the courtiers sped,
And to the exile joyous news convey’d.
Released thus to his wish, the world he saw
Before him wide, but knew not where to go ;
No place of rest in all the earth appear’d
Nor scarce a mortal but whose face he fear’d ;
For all-suspicious, he was lost to know
What friend was friendly—or what friend
a foe ;

Yet in this strait Adullam foremost stood,
As near his kindred of the first in blood.
“ Sure,” then he thought, “ those whom I’ve
often tried

Will never leave me with the turn of tide ;
Sure I shall in their natural feelings find
Some consolation to a drooping mind.”
Then from the city Gath his way he bent
Glad that his scheme had brought the wish’d
event.

To quit the darken'd land, where gentiles reign,
And see his kindred in this world again.

After a weary walk, and gloomy way,
He finds Adullam on a closing day.
And lonely, there his threatened life to save,
Takes up his rest in a capacious cave.
This known,—his parents, kindred, and each
friend,
On him, restored, with lively joy attend ;
And crowds from different causes thither draw,
Those in disease, or debt, and these in woe,
Until at last he to his comfort found
A little army volunteer'd around

David rejoiced—yet fear'd that some might
bring
News of such gathering, to apprize the king,
Who with superior force might soon annoy,
Take him and kindred, and his host destroy.
Hence, with a filial heart, he tries to meet
With favour'd quarters for a still retreat,
Where his dear parents may a time engage,
To dwell secure from royalty and rage.
To Misphah then he goes, and Moab's king
Intreats for leave his parents there to bring,
That they may leave him to himself, to try
The doubtful issue—to emerge, or die !

To Hareth forest bent, removing far
Out of the thunder, and the way of war.

Relation next to Saul's affairs proceeds,
To trace with horror his infernal deeds.
But shrink reflection ! at the thought recoil ;
Let the pen tremble at the painful toil,
For sure it never could in any age
Disgrace so deeply the historic page !
But faithful to its task it now must state
Th' atrocious facts, and thus the deeds relate.
From Gibeah far had fled the shades of night,
And fervid heat advanced with vivid light,
When Saul at Ramah, in malignant mood,
Beneath the umbrage of a cedar stood.
Within his hand he held a fulgent spear,
While his stern aspect spread a boding fear,
As his attendants form'd an ample ring,
Waiting the pleasure of their tyrant king.
They all stood mute ;—but soon he silence broke,
And thus, enraged, in scorn and fury spoke :
“ Hear now, ye Benjamites—hear and disclose
Why thus unfaithful in your master's cause ?
What ! will this upstart shepherd, son of Jess',
Give each a field and vineyard to possess ?
Or will he raise unto some high command,
And make each captain o'er a thousand band,
That you conspire, and ready aid afford
Against your Sovereign and your rightful Lord ?

At this time silence is a crime in you,
For the rebellion of my son you know ;
You know that he with David league hath made,
And that an army is in ambush laid,
Yet none of you, ye mutinizing crew,
Would in your duty this rebellion shew."

The king here ended, and a pause ensued ;
None dared to answer, lest it wrath renew'd ;
Each stood confused ;—when from the silent ring
Forth Doeg stept, and thus address'd the king :
"May't please my Lord ;—at Nob I've lately
been,

And David there in his sedition seen.
Unto Ahimelech, the priest, he came,
Who entertain'd him to his lasting shame ;
For he nor hesitated nor delay'd,
But of the Lord for him inquiry made ;
Nor only present needful cravings fed,
But for the journey gaye the sacred bread,
And arm'd him with Goliath's conquer'd sword,
That treasured trophy, sacred to the Lord."
So spoke the wretch, Saul's chieftain o'er his
herd,

And from the tale the deepest guilt inferr'd ;
A brutal monster, fitly there the head,
But more ferocious than the worst he bred.

Thus basely furnish'd, an express is sent,
(But all unconscious of the vile intent,)

With strict command the sacred tribe to bring,
To face the charge before their injured king-
True to the mandate, they obéy'd the call,
And quick prepared to meet their sovereign Saul.
All guiltless of offence, they go as led,
Nor for the issue feel a boding dread,
Yet little thinking, as they cross'd the plain,
That they should ne'er retrace these steps again !

Thus innocent and unsuspecting go
A flock of lambs to meet the butcher's blow,
That know no fear, though near the wounding
knife,
Prepared to rob them of their blood and life.

They came ;—beheld aloft the gloomy king
Raised o'er his vassals in their humble ring,
In whom, with sorrow, they too soon could trace
Tartarean passions in his angry face.
Then standing meek before th' o'erbearing man,
Saul thus, in rage, the heavy charge began :
“Hear now (and thou as chief, Ahitub's son)
What to my kingdom and to me is done :
Why do you thus conspire against your Lord,
And strength and knowledge to his foes afford ?
By what, Ahimelech, hast thou been led
To give a rebel consecrated bread,
And arm him with Goliath's treasured sword,
Left to thy trust, and sacred to the Lord ?

And why for him too at the ark inquire
To fill his bosom with seditious fire,
That he should now against his Sovereign boast
With hostile arms, and a rebellious host?"

Confounded at the charge the prophets stood :
Each view'd the pontiff in a silent mood,
Expecting from his reverential mouth,
A cooling answer in the honest truth.
The pause was short ;—for soon the priest began
Softly to answer thus the raging man :
"May 't please the king ;—with sorrow 'tis I see
That ill accepted which I've done to thee.
Strange it appears to hear thee David call
A son unfaithful to his father Saul,
Who was so late, (and known but so to me,)
True as a subject and a son to thee ;
As just in all to thy supreme command ;
And who so honour'd in thy house and land ?
Upon these terms alone to me he came,
Graced by thy mission, in thy royal name ;
Hence ev'ry favour he received from me
Was granted only in regard to thee ;
E'en to the lending of the treasured sword,
As in the service of my sovereign lord.

"Thus may my king the truth unfolded see,
And lay no charges to my house or me ;
For we are clear, and nothing know of this
Wherein thy servants can have done amiss."

The auditory stood o'erjoyed to hear
 Defence thus pleaded evidently clear,
 Not doubting but the upright, reverend sire,
 Had quench'd the fury of the monarch's fire;
 But far reverse ! for all, alas ! became
 As copious currents of an oil to flame :
 No reasons touch'd ; he still infuriate stood,
 For what should soften only raised his blood ;
 Hence quick confirming what his aspect spoke,
 From trembling lips this dreadful sentence broke :
 " Hear thou, Ahimelech, nor aught reply ;
 Thou and thy father's house shall surely die ! "

This said, he stopt a moment to respire,
 For words were lost in an excess of ire ;
 But soon as speech permitted to enlarge,
 In son'rous voice he gave this horrid charge :
 " Give ear, my guards, and my commands obey ;
 Deal my due vengeance—all the prophets slay ! !
 Let none escape, for all united are
 In league with David, and my treach'rous train ! "

At this each courtier trembled from his soul ;
 When solemn silence reign'd throughout the whole.
 Dreadful dilemma ! to extend the sword
 None dared against the people of the Lord,
 And yet refusal might abruptly bring
 Death on themselves from their vindictive king.
 Hard was the choice, and yet they nobly stood
 Proof against shedding of the guiltless blood,

Counting offence much safer against Saul,
(A finite being,) than the God of all.
Each true to his own conscientious breast,
Look'd round, most anxious, and survey'd the
rest,

When all (excepting one) unite in heart
And spurn to think of such a cruel part.
But harden'd Doeg, of a savage race,
Felt not—but show'd a most obdurate face ;
And callous to all human nature stood,
Alert for mischief, and athirst for blood.

Dreadful to thousands would have been the
shock,
But here the prophets stood, firm as the rock ;
Silent—unmoved—calm—grave—serene,
And unappall'd amidst the trying scene,
For innocence was theirs, no guilt they knew—
Peace their possession, and a heaven in view ;
For well they knew the utmost stretch of might
Could only waft them to the realms of light ;
Exchange their toils in such a world as this,
For floods of glory, and immortal bliss.

Behold Ahimelech ! a noble sight !
Venerable—majestic—full of heavenly light ;
Deep-versed in wisdom, an high-honour'd sage,
The grace and pillar of the passing age.

Thus calm the holy man ; thus firm the ring
Of e'en his life-guards stood before the king :
Who being thus contemn'd and disobey'd,
Look'd round on all, and all with rage survey'd ;
But Doeg well he knew, and in his face
Could the dark lineage of the savage trace ;
Fit for his purpose, ready to obey ;
He calls—" Go, Doeg, all the prophets slay ! !
Spare not thy hand due recompense to bring,
To free the country, and to serve thy king !"

Ah, Doeg, pause ! let not thy daring hand
Be too subservient to the rash command.
There cast thy eye ;—Ahimelech survey,
Revere his aspect, and the stroke delay :
Look at his reverend front, his silver beard,
His age, his meekness, and his hoary head ;
Then ask thy harden'd heart if it can bear
To act a part so horrid and severe !
Yes !—unrelenting monster, lost to shame,
No aspect awed him, nor could goodness tame ;
But forth he stept, obedient to his lord,
And in the Pontiff sheathed his piercing sword !
A ghastly sight !—Deep from his aged breast
The blood fresh issued, and the ground he press'd ;
When to this lower life he bade adieu,
And sprang to regions of a brighter view,
Where trials end, and human passions cease,
And all is love, and harmony and peace.

Thus on the murderer went as he began,
And carried rapid death from man to man,
Till out of eighty-six (the sacred band)
But one eluded his destructive hand!
Heart-rending sight !—without a fault to find
To see them slaughter'd to a tyrant's mind ;
See eighty-five thus innocently fall
At the capricious will of wicked Saul.

Thus by the scythe, swept o'er the scented
field
The flowers and herbage to the mower yield ;
Bow down their heads to its destructive sway,
And in one mass together die away.

Who would but think that such a sanguine flood
Might glut the keenest in their rage for blood ?
But sad reverse ! Ah doleful tale to tell ;
Thousands must fall, as those so lately fell.
The very city (these poor martyrs' home)
Must in destruction soon a wreck become,
Where all that live and breathe the vital air
Alike must suffer, and of vengeance share !

Next morning soon, as from the east afar,
The streaks of light excell'd the twinkling star,
Up Doeg rises at the early call
To spread death wider at the will of Saul.
A ruffian troop, quick in such times of need,
Were pick'd to suit the execrable deed.

Fit man their leader for the chief command,
To choose his fellows, and inspire the band.
These singled out, a daring host they stood,
Fierce—and all-anxious for the work of blood!

Thus to the clangour of the huntsman's horn
A pack of beagles join at early dawn,
Full-mouth'd, and eager for the bloody chase,
Against a timid, inoffensive race. ;

So flush'd, they hasten on their hostile way,
Sad work to finish ere the close of day.
Devoted Nob!—ah, tremble at thy doom,
At thy destruction on the point to come!
Short is the knowledge of the human mind ;
To all in future, though at hand, how blind !
Ah ye inhabitants, you little know
What now awaits of terror, death, and woe ;
Unconscious of offence, you know no fear,
Nor dream of danger, though, alas, so near !
But see yon powerful host, with fury blown,
They bring destruction to your happy town.
What pity that so fair a place should fall
To utter ruin by the wrath of Saul ;
Pity indeed yon turrets and yon spire
Should sink to ashes by the rage of fire ;
All as at once which thus so grand appears,
The tedious labour of unnumber'd years.
But though thy aspect may our pity gain,
As all must soon be levell'd with the plain,

Yet what art thou, though into ruin hurld,
Compared with life?—an atom to a world!
O thought superior! what a race must go
And sink abruptly to the grave below!
And doubtless many there must lifeless lie
Caught in a swing of sins—unfit to die!
For whom, alas, the ruffians will not spare
Time for repentance, or a moment's prayer:
No!—with the righteous, they must, one and all,
Resign existence, and promiscuous fall!

The deed begins!—through every gate they
press,
And ravage on, committing all excess,
O'erpower'd by arms, and taken by surprise,
Vain is resistance, nor avail their cries.
Deaths follow deaths, by undisputed sway,
'Till all destroy'd by horrid murders lay,
Whose mangled bodies are confusedly hurl'd,
With spirits centred in another world!

The town yet stood, and yet retain'd a name;
But now, at last, behold it all a flame!
From every quarter at one time aspire
Volumes of smoke, and roaring sheets of fire:
The timbers crack—the walls to ruin fall,
And in one mass of fire they bury all!

Sad is the wreck!—and yet a part remains;
Destruction threatens the adjacent plains.

The sheep, the camels, and the beasts alive,
Left to the last, a little yet survive ;
To these from hence they bend in haste away,
And all to finish,—every creature slay !
'Tis done complete ! nor man nor beast alive
The general wreck and massacre survive,
But all is now become, destroy'd and slain,
A lifeless town, and desolated plain ! !

END OF BOOK THE THIRD.

D A V I D.



Book the Fourth.

ARGUMENT.

Abiathar informs David of the death of the prophets.—David's lamentation for them.—He hears of the Philistines' coming against Keilah, and opposes them with success.—Saul obtains information of David, and thinks to secure him.—David removes to the land of Ziph with his men, and disappoints their king of his expectations.—Jonathan pays him a kind visit there.—The Ziphites inform Saul of David, who now removes further to Maon, and dwells in a cave there.—Saul pursues him with every prospect of success, but is suddenly called off to a war with the invading Philistines.—He returns again, and in his way enters the very cave where David had taken up his abode.—David refuses to do him any personal injury, but cuts off the skirt of his robe unseen.—He discovers himself to Saul, when out of the cave, who is overcome with David's forbearance, and kindly thanks him, with tears, in a prophetic speech against himself.—Samuel dies.—His character and funeral.—David goes to the desert of Paran.—Sends men to Nabal, at his annual sheep-shearing, to solicit some of his provisions.—They are roughly treated by the master, and refused their errand.—David rashly resents the affront, but Nabal's amiable wife, Abigail, pacifies him.—Nabal dies, and David obtains his widow to be his wife, his former one, his dear Michal, having been given away before to one Phalli, by Saul, in David's absence.

DAVID.

Book the Fourth.

These devastations o'er—we yet must know
A mix'd narration—oft of scenes of woe;
At times on painful themes a while must dwell,
And uncouth tales of glaring errors tell.

We turn to David, still to see him stand,
A lonely exile in a desert land,
To whom Abiathar (who lived to tell
How all his brethren of the priesthood fell)
Now hastes in grief, while boding fears prevail,
To mournfully relate the dreadful tale.
As when to Job the doleful news went post,
That his loved children and his all were lost,
A grief like his the tidings now impart,
Wound David's mind, and rend his feeling heart.
He sigh'd and wept, and, comfortless, refused
All consolation, and thus mourning mused;

“O sacred tribe ! alas, and are you dead !
Then what remorse and horrors fill my head !
For I have been the cause of all the strife
Which thus has brought you to the loss of life.
O ! could I now a sacrifice be made,
And bring you living from the silent dead,
How freely would I give my life for you,
And pay that ransom-price so justly due ;
For what is one, when taken into view,
With such a number, and such worthies too ?
It cannot be !—alas ! alas ! they ’re gone,
Departed hence, and never will return,
Thus sunk abruptly by the wrath of Saul ;
And I am left to feel the loss of all.

“O dear Ahimelech ! my worthy friend ;
Thy life I honour’d ; I lament thy end.
For who so dignified is left us here,
To fill thy station, and thy rank to bear ?
Who can succeed to take the sacred lead,
And pour sweet counsel from the heart and
head ?
But what, alas ! will lamentations do,
Or all the tokens of excessive woe ?
The scene is past ! all boisterous blasts are o’er,
And you are landed on the peaceful shore,
While we remain upon this trying scene,
Where strong partitions part, and intervene.
Ah ! may I then, who still am left on earth,
Like you, while here, prepare for sudden death,

That when the tempests of my life are o'er,
You may salute me on that happy shore."

Thus David felt;—and deep and long the
smart

Dwelt on his mind, and oft oppress'd his heart;
But for the prophet now (who thus had come
Escaped in fear, deprived of friends and home)
His care was turn'd, to whom he kindly said,
"Here rest with us; let none thy peace invade,
For I will screen thee from the reach of Saul,
And what shall come to thee shall come to all."

Report now reaches David's watchful ear,
That 'gainst Keilah pagan troops appear;
That the Philistine host a torrent pours,
Frights them unarm'd, and robs the thrashing
floors;

On which he turns, as wont, again to try
For best instruction, and has this reply:
"Go, save Keilah;—the Philistines fight,
Exalt thy banner, and their armies smite."

David had faith, for well he knew the word
Was firm in truth when issued from the Lord;
But not so all his men, for they reply:
"Sure if we meet them, we but meet to die;
For if in Judah we in fears are lost,
What then to dare such a tremendous host?"

This stagger'd David ;—hence he tried again
For confirmation to convince his men,
When heav'n in condescension clear'd the way,
And thus was pleased in doubtless terms to say :
“ Arise—go down—and make no longer stand,
For I have giv'n them to thy conquering hand.”

All now united heart and hand in might,
And braced on armour for a vigorous fight ;
When soon they dash'd among th' invading crew,
O'erwhelm'd their troops, and many thousands
slew ;
On which the people witness'd full relief
From threaten'd ruin and distressing grief.

News soon reach'd Saul, that thus the turn of
tide
Had David brought within their walls to hide,
On which, he hoped with ease to gain his
ends,
When to this point with energy he bends :
“ Secure,” says he, “ I have this man of wars
Pent in the city, bound with walls and bars ;
Then force prepare, nor lose a single hour !
Haste ! make him safe while thus within our power ;
For God at last hath brought him to this stand,
And giv'n him to my recompensing hand.”
Orders were quick ; yet not without delay,
Such tribes he muster'd to secure his prey,

That David gain'd, ere they could all proceed,
Sure information of th' intended deed.

The mass of force in preparation drawn
Renew'd a dread in former seasons known ;
Hence David to his best of guides again
Turn'd now to learn what man could not explain.
Abiathar he calls, who, wise in thought,
From Ramah had a sacred Ephod brought,
When thus the king : " Thou know'st, O Lord
of all !

What is design'd me from my sovereign Saul ;
Then be Thou pleased to let thy servant know,
That blest by Thee, he may avert the blow."

Short was the answer, but by favour shown.
" That he would come, nor even spare the town."

David again : " But will they prove to be
Of treacherous conduct, or stand firm by me ? "
Return was made, " Nay—no dependence have ;
They will betray thee, and the city save."

This was enough ;—obedient to the call,
His faithful comrades join him, one and all,
And though six hundred strong, through street
and bar,
Quit for their safety such a threat'ning war ;
Glad thus to leave the fickle crowd behind,
Who harbour'd such ingratitude of mind ;

But yet knew not, in wandering mazes lost,
What way to turn, or where to fix their post :
Th' abodes of men seem'd to their views a snare.
And all the world but troubles, toil, and care.

Thus sore perplex'd, from man they tried to stray,
And to the mountains bent their cheerless way,
To lands of Ziph, which rocks and woods disclose,
The tiger's refuge, and the wolf's repose ;
There fix'd their tents, in this wild, lone abode,
Where wandering mortals had but seldom trod.

Keilah left, the news soon came to Saul,
Who, chagrin'd, saw another project fall,
But in vexation at the cross defeat,
He turn'd to find him in his next retreat ;
Though bad success attended his pursuit,
A work of toil, and no reward of fruit,
For so the Lord, of sovereign right above,
Made, once again, the schemes abortive prove.

Though David here held a remote abode,
His royal friend pursued o'er trackless road,
And found his dwelling ; where again between
Their ardent minds ensues a melting scene ;
In which the prince, (although he felt the rod,)
Strengthen'd his mind in duty to his God ;
To humbly trust, and in deep reverence bow,
Though nature felt the adverse winds to blow ;

Then thus he cheers : " Fear not, my honoured friend,

For all these trials will in blessings end ;

Thou shalt in spite of opposition gain

The sacred throne, and over Israel reign ;

Become her king, by Heaven's upright decree,

And I in station shall be next to thee.

This well my father knows, and hence the cause

Why his estrangement so severe arose."

Magnanimous youth ! who thus couldst view
thy friend

Supplant thy station, and the throne ascend ;

Yea, couldst, through all, his many wrongs oppose,

And stand the foremost to support his cause.

Intrepid mind ! what strength required to take

So great a cross, and such concessions make !

But duty calling to a track oft trod,

Thou bow'dst to friendship, and to serve thy

God.

Noble example ! may it grace the page,

And stand recorded to the latest age !

In revelation thus how clear his mind

Towards his friend—yet to himself how blind !

Ah ! little thought he, when he thus reveal'd

One certain fact, another was conceal'd ;

But a short time the fatal truth unfurl'd,

And rank'd his station in another world !

Then ere they close, they covenant again
Before the Lord in friendship to remain,
In that cemented love so often tried,
Which nothing warp'd, or ever turn'd aside.

At length they parted thoughtful and oppress'd,
Mingled their tears, and in th' adieu caress'd.
David remain'd at his uncertain post,
A self-made chieftain o'er a little host,
While Jonathan departs o'er wilds to roam,
And dreary wastes, to seek his cheerless home.

Thus they remote, while plotting at the court
The busy Zophites to the king resort,
And carry news that David may be found
Hid in the coverts of Hachilah's ground ;
Proposing on their part (success so sure)
To give him up to Saul's disposing power.

Saul warmly thank'd them for the news they
brought,
For their commiseration and their thought ;
“ But first return,” he to their news replies,
“ And find the quarter where he skulking lies,
For he is subtle, flies from place to place,
Eludes the eye—is difficult to trace ;
Nor spare inquiry, that with better view,
We may our object in his flight pursue ;
And I will bring a widely-sweeping band
To search and seize him, if within the land.”

For this they turn—but the impatient king
Now lets out fancy on its painted wing,
Whose glowing colours feast the sanguine eye,
And promise every wish to gratify.
So flush'd in spirits, and at heart elate,
He cannot bear for their report to wait,
But sets to work with all-providing care
For the great feat his armies to prepare ;
Vast numbers ordering to effect his plan
To take in triumph the devoted man.
But David heard of the collected host,
And to elude them quickly changed his post ;
With his few men he then to Maon trod
Where in a cave he fix'd his dark abode,
In hopes that, so select, and private too,
No search could find him, though they might
pursue.

Saul now set forward on his hostile race,
But bent his prospects to the former place ;
Where foil'd he gains, like some sagacious hound,
Scent of a track by which the game is found,
And so elated that he deems him sure
Within the vortex of his grasping power ;
And near it seem'd, for they at once were seen
On hills opposed, and but a vale between,
While part inclosed him in their numerous train,
With hope at height, an easy prey to gain,
And to all prospect had secured his fall
Beneath the arms and greater power of Saul.

Thus some keen fowler, on a sporting ground,
His game incloses with a net around,
Draws near to seize, impatient at delay,
In certain prospect of his trembling prey,
Yet ere the catch can feast his anxious eye,
A cord may slip and let the captives fly :
So here it proved—for ere Saul could prevail,
The grasp was brought by an event to fail.

Thus David's cause, to closest pinch is come,
Short space apparent ere his final doom,
When he, and all his friends, who close had stood,
Must give up all, and seal it with their blood.
Oh sad dilemma ! when so near the grave,
Beyond the power of mortal man to save !
When thou canst not on flesh and blood repose,
Nor hope for mercy from thy bitter foes ;
Nor in the aid of strongest friendship trust ;
(The feeble efforts of the sons of dust ;)
For what are they in such unequal strife ?
They cannot rescue thy devoted life ;
Not all so much as roll a stone away,
For thy escape to live another day.

What then remains ?—Yes—there remains
o'er all

An arm, all-powerful to avert thy fall ;
Then hold thy faith, though now so nearly run ;
Hold fast thy faith, and see what will be done ;

For though yet hid, a prompt relief will come
To snatch thee safe from terrors and a tomb ;
By secret means, though of such long delay,
Thy God will work for thee an open way,
And let thyself, and Jew and Gentile, see
His signal favours still conferr'd on thee ;
For now, behold, his interposing care
Gives the relief by sudden turn of war.
Just at this time, and on a mettled steed,
A man approach'd—a herald, bent on speed ;
With anxious looks, and sweating as he rode,
He push'd to Saul, and thus address'd his Lord :
“ Haste, O my king! with all thou canst command,
For the Philistines now invade the land.”

Enough was said ;—they quick prepare to go,
To fight more fairly with the common foe,
Alive, and anxious in a greater cause,
To make a stand against a field of foes ;
A host that wisely chose the present hour
To dash upon them with a rapid power,
While Saul was absent, and engaged afar,
To urge with only one a puerile war.
Then off they go; the heathens only mind,
Forgetful of these little things behind,
Turning their backs on David, and on all,
Released from trembling at the threaten'd fall.

Great was the rescue from so near a stroke,
Which gratitude in David's mind awoke ;

And as he oft was wont, so now he sings
Hymns of thanksgiving to the King of kings.

Thus at this time he witness'd great relief,
His life from danger, and his mind from grief;
Yet knowing not how soon the restless king
Might back again his sweeping forces bring,
He deem'd it safest, with his little train,
To quit the place, and stronger holds to gain ;
When to En-gedi they for safety move
To rocks inhabit in the hills above,
And for awhile in seeming safety stay,
Except from terrors of the beasts of prey;
For here runs wild the fierce, ferocious bear,
The leopards ravage, and the lions roar.

As the poor hare, before the eager chase,
Is prest for life, 'and seeks a quiet place ;
Finds it, and rests—but here disturb'd again,
She quits and flies—but flies and quits in vain :
So David for his life is forced to fly
From place to place, but none a rest supply.

Ere long the king this Pagan war suppress,
And from that quarter gain'd a present rest ;
Hence now he warmly turns to former views,
And all the rancour of his heart renews.
Inform'd again through some malicious mind,
Where he may David at this moment find,

He chooses out three thousand men to stray
O'er rocks and mountains to pursue his prey ;
Nor spares himself, though ill the toil may suit,
In such a rugged, such a wild pursuit,
O'er trackless wastes, and far away from home,
Where browsing goats in boundless pastures roam.
Far more consistent would have been th' employ
At court with courtiers—and domestic joy ;
But what will not vindictive minds sustain
Of toils and perils, wrathful ends to gain,
Although th' indulgence is so sure to bring
A bitter potion, and a poignant sting ?

When rolling oceans, with the tempest's roar,
Rage, dash, and foam against the rocky shore,
Waves try to pierce at each tremendous stroke
But back recoil, and in themselves are broke ;
So Saul in vain with boist'rous anger toil'd,
While all his fury on himself recoil'd.

In this wild chase the monarch turn'd aside,
A cave to enter, spacious, cool, and wide.
His purpose private, he stept singly by,
And, as he thought, unknown to ear or eye,
For none around the murky cell he spied ;
When quick he cast his royal robe aside ;
Freed from restraint, and seemingly alone,
His army scatter'd, or before him gone.
Thus unprotected—what a need of fear !
For lo !—the dreaded man was very near !

Who at one stroke might have deprived of life,
To end his days, and close his deeds of strife ;
For in the rocks that form'd its ample side,
David and comrades had retired to hide,
Where long to darkness they inured had been,
And could distinctly see, and not be seen,
Whilst Saul, emerging from meridian light,
Was overpower'd with gloom that dimm'd his
sight ;

When at this juncture one, with ready hand,
Thus urges death, and only waits command :
“ Behold the time of which the Lord hath said,
‘ Low at thy footstool shall thy foe be laid,
Into thy hands he shall delivered be,
That thou may 'st do what seemeth good to thee.’ ”
“ No ”—whisper'd David in low voice again,
“ No blood so sacred shall my weapons stain ;
Be it forbidden that my sword should fall
On God's anointed, and my father Saul.”

This check he gave—nor longer arguing staid,
But softly stept to where the mantle laid,
Cut off its skirt without exciting fear,
And back return'd, nor startled eye or ear.
This was a gentle act, and even proved
Whom he revered, and as a son he loved,
And yet it seems it touch'd a tender part,
As if irreverent, and he felt a smart ;
And sure it might be deem'd a step too far
Thus bold and free a royal robe to mar.

Now Saul arose, departed from the place,
Again the object of his wrath to trace ;
But with surprise these sounds accost his ear :
“ My Lord the king, thy son and servant hear !”
Back now he looks, sees David on the ground,
To meet his monarch with a bow profound,
When he resumes : “ Be pleased to lend an ear
To my petition, and with patience hear.
Why should'st thou suffer a malicious tale
To hurt thy mind, and o'er thy peace prevail ?
To hear the vile, injurious thoughts instil
In base design, as if I sought thy ill ?
Know then, my lord, convincing proof I bear,
Thy life I seek not—but my king revere ;
For in this cave we were together come,
And at one stroke I might have seal'd thy doom,
To which some urged me, as if Heavenly Power
Had so design'd it in that favour'd hour ;
But I withheld inflicting death or pain,
Nor shall paternal blood my weapon stain.
As proof, behold !—(and let it touch thy breast,)
I hold a portion of thy royal vest,
Hence near I must have been, and thou must see
Thy life in mercy has been spared to thee.

“ Why should my lord, the sovereign of the
land,
Against a flea thus raise his powerful hand !

Sure 'tis beneath his dignity to go
In war opposed to an imagined foe ;
To fight the feeble and obscure—and one
That holds no wish against his king or throne.

“ May then the Lord who rules, and all can see,
Adjudge th' offence that separates thee and me ;
In whom I trust, and firm in faith I stand,
That He will free me from thy vengeful hand.”

Saul now confounded, feels a crowd of fears,
Is stung with grief, and sheds a flood of tears :
In faltering accents then he thus began :
“ Is this the language of the injured man ?”
Then wept aloud, for deep it touch'd his heart ;
When thus he added, as he could impart :
“ Thou art more righteous, O my Son ! than I ;
Good thou hast render'd when my wrath was high ;
Thus nobly spared, when cast upon thy will,
And proved by mercy that thou bear'st no ill :
May then the Lord reward thy special care,
Who thus in goodness has been pleased to spare.
Sure this I know, that in some future day
Thou shalt be king, and bear the regal sway,
And in thy heirs, by a Divine command,
The throne, descending, shall securely stand ;
Then by the Lord, to me in kindness, swear,
That my descendants shall enjoy thy care ;
That thou wilt not cut off nor sire nor son,
In line from those now seated on the throne,

Nor from my father's house destroy my name,
By right entitled to its rank in fame."

As thus requested, David granted all,
And bound himself to please his father Saul ;
When from the place they reconciledly part,
The king returning with a soften'd heart ;
But David kept in holds of strength, to bar
From future harm, should Saul resume the war.

From Saul and David turning, next we come
To Samuel's exit to his final home. .
Death snatch'd the honoured sage, and brought
a close
To all his labours and his many woes ;
When the freed soul departed from its earth
To glorious realms beyond the reach of death,
Where nothing mundane can the saints annoy,
In their possession of transcendent joy.
Like other prophets, he possessed his share
Of heavy burdens, not his own, to bear ;
For though the heart be innocent within,
They yet feel deep the prevalence of sin,
Mourn the defection from the righteous cause,
And seek the good of all—of friends and foes.
E'en to the present day the righteous find
The like strong travail to possess the mind.
Such was his lot, and larger it appears
Than fell to many of his fellow seers.
He eminently stood ;—his favours large,
And great the duty that became his charge :

And though perhaps no sculptor carved his name,
To deck his grave, and enlogize his fame,
Yet sacred record gives it better far
Than pomp of monarchs, or the feats of war.
But what is stone? or what the marble bust?
For these have long been crumbled into dust;
Or what to him that men in every age
Should read his virtues in the letter'd page?
E'en baseless all—with all their charms unfurl'd,
To his fruitions in another world,
Which then commenced, when freed his
pilgrimage,
Have been his portion down through many an age,
And will the bright beatitudes display
When all creation shall be swept away.

A gen'ral mourning through all Israel ran,
Lamenting deeply the departed man;
Vast concourse drawing from afar and near,
To the last token of the honour'd bier:
In which great loss our exile felt his part,
For worth had placed him near to David's heart.
In early life the honour'd seer he knew,
And as years lengthen'd their attachment grew;
Yet with the mourners he could not appear,
But dropt, remote, his tributary tear.

Now Samuel gone;—the mournful David rose
And to the desert of wide Paran goes;

A howling waste—a wilderness of lands,
Of dreary aspect over burning sands,
Where far within few ever fix'd abode,
Or foot of man with languid labour trod.
Short space advanced within this lonely land,
He took his station with his little band,
With peace in prospect, when removed so far
From his oppressor and the scenes of war.

Awhile sojourning here, provisions fail,
And fears of want his thoughtful mind assail ;
Invention's rack'd to live as heretofore,
In lands so sterile, and with little store.
Hence, as he lay one night upon his bed,
These ruminations occupied his head :
“ There is,” thought he, “ a man they often name
For vast possessions—of extensive fame,
Who lives in Macn, but of Carmel's lands
A wide extension, with his stock, commands ;
Who long since boasted of his boundless store,
And gathering riches now have added more.
Thousands of sheep and goats, well fatted, were
Flocks of his pasture that engross'd his care,
And now his shearing, just begun, I know
In Carmel makes a great abundance flow ;
And though penurious, yet in such we see
They have their fancies, and can liberal be ;
This then must be the time—there must abound
With them abundance for the guests around ;

For it is known from well confirm'd report
That numbers yearly to the place resort,
Drawn to the spot in a carouse to share
Of a free banquet and a common fare.
Then to the master I will kindly send
To ask a portion as a neighbouring friend,
To join their party, and partake a share
With them of pleasures o'er their fleecy care :
For, though thus known to be of narrow name,
Yet for our kindness we the gift may claim ;
Then now for once I will assay to know
How far a miser's charity will go."

At length the morning sun began to rise,
And tinge with red the oriental skies.
Resolved ;—he rose an errand thus to send ;
Some chosen men to execute attend,
Whom to this mansion David gave to bear,
In soft entreaty, a persuasive prayer,
To beg a portion of the food profuse,
To serve their master's and his soldiers' use.
In general terms he orders how to greet,
How to implore, and how the host to treat.

Instructed thus, away the heralds speed,
Full of their charge, and anxious to succeed,
But doubting their success, for Nabal's name
Was widely branded as of churlish fame ;
Of parsimonious thrift, and meanly low,
Yet wont at times to make a liberal show,

To quaff the bowl, to deal the wine around
And wanton wildly to the music's sound :
Known so when young, and strength'ning at each
stage,

They now enslaved him in declining age ;
For if in youth the passions are not slain,
Too oft at last predominant they reign,
And when the second child comes on through
years,

A former habit more exposed appears ;
Then sad to see a mortal prone to crime
When life stands tottering on the verge of time !
Not so his Abigail—a worthy wife,
Of high esteem, and of an even life :
Renown'd for wisdom ; affable and kind ;
Of comely aspect, and of noble mind ;
Yet when required, she could with steady hand
A strict obedience to her will command.

The servants now arrive, and with some fear
Before the ruler of the feast appear,
And greet him thus : " Hail, master of this home ;
Peace be to thee and all beneath thy dome.
Thy servant David wishes to convey
Through us, a blessing on this feastful day ;
For whom we crave thou kindly wilt attend
To his request, and treat him as a friend.

" Report of these good times our master hears,
Where plenty reigns, and much to spare appears,

Where varied viands are not only prest
On useful labourers, but each stranger-guest ;
Then may it please thee a small part to spare,
That our commander and his men may share ;
Like others, may a welcome party make,
And in the joy with thee and thine partake.

“ We ask no dainties for our master’s use,
(For beggars surely have no right to choose,)
But hope in bounty thou wilt rights regard,
As generous actions claim a just reward ;
And thou may’st call to mind what special heed
Thy shepherds witness’d in their times of need ;
When on these spacious plains thy flocks were
seen

By thousands spread to gambol on the green ;
For did not then our host ward off alarm,
And guard both shepherds and the sheep from
harm.

For such protection, then, be pleased to spare
Of thy provisions to these men a share,
That from thy board they may enjoy at least
A grateful token in the general feast,
Indulge in gladness at thy plenteous store,
And often bless thee when these days are o’er.”

Old Nabal frown’d, as if he could not brook
The modest freedom which the strangers took,
Nor for such favours, in his avarice, bear
Thoughts of a little as a boon to spare.

Quick to refuse, an answer soon he broke,
And in harsh accents thus he sternly spoke :
“ Who is this David ?—Who this Jesse’s son,
For whom such errands you are quick to run ?
Is he some upstart of ambitious mind,
Not to the service of his lord inclined ?
For many servants at this day we see
Desert their posts untimely to be free.
Shall I then take provisions of my feast,
(For those who labour, and deserve them, drest,)
And, with a thoughtless and profusive hand,
Give unto strangers, who no right command ?
No !—thought prepost’rous !—I the grant refuse,
And keep my victuals for their proper use.
Go then, and measure back the ground you came,
And blush returning to your master’s shame,
Who thus has sent, to feed himself and host
With food and dainties at another’s cost.”

To modest beggars thus enough was said ;
No more they urged it—but abruptly fled ;
Unto their chieftain disappointed ran
With the rough answer from the churlish man,
Where word for word they in report repeat,
Which quickly raises David’s martial heat.
Aroused ;—resentment and revenge become
His rash decision, and denouncing doom.
“ To arms !—to arms !”—the fiery captain said,
Bind on your armour ; follow where I lead !

What! shall this wretch his railing thus bestow,
Reward us thus, and no chastisement know?
No!—take his due, for he and his shall feel
The full reward of my inflicting steel!
So said, four hundred men compose a band
To carry vengeance with destructive hand;
Against the guiltless, guilty war to wage,
And wreak unbridled his vindictive rage.

As some fell lion, tyrant of the wood,
Draws to its verge, athirst for human blood,
And in the meads beholds some children play,
Then sits prepared to dart upon its prey:
So flush'd and hot the eager chieftain stood,
Alike high-bristled, and prepared for blood,
Alike untouch'd for innocence to care,
The feeble pity, or the helpless spare.

Forth then he marches on his hostile way,
The house to visit, and his objects slay!
But hold, rash man! halt in thy eager speed,
And pause a moment at the cruel deed;
Let cool reflection thy strong will assail,
And better judgment over all prevail.
In prospect now an awful act appears,
That may embitter thy succeeding years;
The retrospection, when too late to mend,
Thy feelings harrass, and thy bosom rend.

What !—only one to blame—and shall they all
Before the torrent of thy fury fall ?
Avert it heaven !—some guardian angel send
To shield the guiltless, and the weak defend ;
Thy chosen one from rashness to restrain,
And ward his conduct from so foul a stain.
Yes !—'tis forbid ;—so far he must not go,
Arrested short of such a scene of woe ;
A change shall come, and a short time shall prove
His rage subdued, and melted into love ;
For so the Sovereign of the human will
Acts now by second means to stop the ill.

Whilst thus infuriate David is become,
Some caught alarm at Nabal's threaten'd home :
A faithful servant heard the answer sent,
And from its harshness fear'd some sad event,
Well knowing David stood on martial ground,
And that such rudeness would his honour wound ;
Then, as his duty led, the matron's ear
He soon apprizes of his prudent fear,
With whose wise counsels he had cause to know
They might concert to ward a pending blow.
Thus he :—“ Be pleased, O mistress ! now to hear
A case demanding thy immediate care,
Thy prompt decision on the best design ;
For mischief hovers over thee and thine.
This morning from the wilderness there came
Ten soldiers charged with captain David's name,

And modestly made known a small request,
To share a little of our shearing feast ;
Due for the kindness which we had to share
While in attendance on our fleecy care ;
For true it was, as we can justly say,
They were our bulwark both by night and day ;
For while surrounded by their quiet host,
No goods were missing, nor a lamb was lost.
Hard was it then, an answer most severe,
From our stern master in return to hear,
For all was railing, which we heard with shame,
Enough to kindle a retorting flame.
Then dangers we may bode, as not afar,
From such a roughness to a man of war..
Consider then in what is our defence,
And what may best atone for such offence ;
Nor time suspend, for danger I foresee
Hastes on our master, on us all, and thee."

The servant thus express'd his fears and grief,
And placed dependence on their female chief,
Who now revolved in her capacious mind
The threat'ning prospect, and the cure to find.
Her purpose fix'd, she now adopts a plan
To calm the hero, and to please the man :
Collect," says she, "two hundred loaves of bread,
Of wine two bottles, of the briskest head ;
Five sheep, drest ready, of the fattest slain ;
Of corn five measures, best of all the grain ;

One hundred of the cluster'd raisin-flakes,
And figs two hundred, of the richest cakes.
These lay on asses—drive them on before,
And I will follow as you bear the store.”
Thus she directs, and thus the servants do
With cheerful pleasure—and with hope they go.

All this was done unheard by Nabal's ear,
Nor sees his eye the treasures thus they bear,
Or else a storm of words would soon be sent
To hold the presents, and the good prevent :
But more engaged in dainties left to taste,
He drinks and revels in the flowing feast.

Thus Abigail, deep-musing, leaves her home,
And sighing, ponders what of all will come.
Wrapt up in thought on what she soon must find,
A calm ensues to re-compose her mind,
In which 'tis shown her of some things to come
In future years, that will be blest to some ;
And hence she soon a prophetess became
Of David's blessings, eminence, and fame.

Thus exercised, she onward bent her course,
And soon beheld opposed a martial force ;
When down two hills, a valley just between,
They each descend, and unto each are seen.
Now met ;—she springs from off her ass to greet,
And falls down prostrate at the warrior's feet ;

When thus she pleads, while starts the crystal
tear,

And, hush'd to silence, all attend to hear :

“ On me—on me—my lord, cast all the blame,

Let me the burden bear, and all the shame ;

Let thy resentment centre on my head,

While I for mercy on thy goodness plead.

Then be thou pleased a moment now to spare,

While I the truths of what occur'd declare.

Regard not Nabal, my tyrannic lord,

Whose name and nature but too well accord,

For oft I feel, and to my sorrow know,

His name is “ Folly,” and his nature too ;

Whose conduct 'tis not in my power to move,

Or I would change it for a fund of love.

“ Know then, my lord, that when thy servants
came,

To bring a message in thy gracious name,

It was unheard of and unknown by me,

'Till they departed, and returned to thee.

Then be thou pleased thy sanguine hand to stay,

Nor for the guilty *one*, such numbers slay :

And he too one whose froward deeds and strife

Destroy the comforts of domestic life ;

Enough to bear in daily grief of heart,

Without additions on another's part.

Then leave the man ;—and here see from his
board

A willing present render'd to my lord ;

Normind by whom it comes to calm the strife,
For though no act of his—'tis by his wife ;
And we, the females, in those stations claim
The dues of wedlock—in all rights the same.
Glad then I bring, selected from our store,
A choice of viands, but could wish them more ;
Yet these accept—accept as they are meant,
To sue for peace, and ward a dire event ;
That, freed from such a scene of sad distress,
We may our homes in confidence possess,
And thou, diverted in the point of time,
Avoid the evil of so great a crime.
Nor let thy men be in the boon forgot,
But in requital give to each a lot,
Who have a right our gratitude to share
For their protection to our fields of care.

“ Now may my lord all in good part receive,
And what is wrong his generous heart forgive,
For I but crave in this my suppliant mood,
To stay thy hand from shedding guiltless blood ;
That such a crime may never—never stain
Thy better life, nor give thy bosom pain ;
Nor cause the Lord, in any future day,
To turn the blessings He designs away ;
For hitherto thou hast a fav'rite been,
And many tokens of his favours seen.
Kind Heaven hath prized thy innocence and truth,
Thy rectitude of life, and zeal of youth,

Wherein thou hast maintain'd the sacred cause
Against backsliders and its heathen foes,
Fought the Lord's battles to thy utmost might,
And back repell'd the gloom of pagan night.
For such good deeds thy gracious God will raise
A house for thee, and bless thy future days,
And to past favours add still favours more,
And bind thee closely in his precious store.

“ Although a man with all his power and art
Rose up to chase thee as a hunted hart,
Yet no fell weapons shall success command,
Raised to thy hurt by a designing hand,
But inoffensive they shall take the wing,
And fly as pebbles from a feeble sling;
That thou may'st still high elevation gain,
E'en over Israel to command and reign.
Then, when thus seated, it will sure afford
No grief in memory to my honour'd lord,
When he reflects in mind from time to time
That he was stay'd from such a bloody crime,
Nor yet a blush his manly cheek assail
To think therein a female could prevail.
For when convictions are brought clearly home
A noble mind regards not whence they come.
And though at times thy sun in clouds may shine,
Yet be assured that blessings will be thine :
And when such favours are conferr'd on thee,
This day recall—and then remember me.”

Thus soft persuasion captivating hung
On the sweet accents of her pleasing tongue,
When as she closed, a meek expressive eye
Told what she felt in waiting a reply;
But David stood convicted, and in awe
To hear such language from a female flow :
He felt it ;—and admired the solid sense
Spoke to the heart, in winning eloquence.
Then after a short pause, (for trembling hung
Words scarce commanded on the faltering
tongue,)

His feelings found a vent ;—the melted man
Laid by the soldier, and thus mild began :
“ I bless the Lord, who in this time of need
Has check'd my purpose ere I did the deed ;
For sure it was my will, this very day,
All of thy house before the sword to slay.
And blest be thou ; thy pleadings have o'er-
come

The evil thought, and brought conviction home.
I stand condemn'd, and speak it to my shame,
For thus indulging a vindictive flame,
Which might have caused a future lasting smart,
And broke my comfort by a wounded heart.
Pride of thy sex ;—to thee my thanks be paid
Who hast a blessing thus been kindly made ;
And for thy presents too, I thanks impart,
As sprung from wisdom, and a generous heart.

Thee I accept ;—then in assurance stand
Of life and safety under my command.
Go—carry peace—convey good tidings home,
And fear no evil in the time to come.”

All thus was reconciled ;—and now they part,
Each calm in mind, and with a lighten'd heart.
David turn'd back, with gratitude of mind,
His desert regions, with his men, to find,
While Abigail returns to rural life,
To fill her station as becomes a wife ;
One who deserved a better home, and ease,
A home of comfort, and domestic peace.
Arrived ; she finds they hold no day of fast,
Nor fear they evil from what lately past,
For varied food, and rarities profuse,
Are free regaled on by the jovial house,
As songs and music in confusion sound,
And nimble dancers trip an airy round,
While the gold vase is fill'd and fill'd again
With foaming wine to stupify the brain.

Old Nabal, by the juice of grapes o'ercome,
Forgets his station as a lord of-home.
Unfit that night important news to hear
Of dreadful dangers which have been so near,
His prudent spouse suspends to tell the tale
'Till clearer senses o'er the sot prevail.

To bed he totter'd, and till rising day,
Snored—dream'd—and slept his drunkenness
away.

The morning came at length ;—he left his bed,
But felt the torture of an aching head :
Yet calmer grown, his wife relates the whole
Of his misconduct, and their threatened fall,
Which so affects him that his spirits fail,
And deadly horrors o'er his thoughts prevail,
That with a frame debauch'd, and mental low,
He sunk o'erwhelm'd into the deeps of woe,
Which quickly brought him past all power to save,
A self-made victim to the silent grave.
Some days pass'd on, as if in doubtful strife,
Whilst the pulse flutter'd with an ebbing life,
When death ensued, that freed his worthy mate
From domination, and a suffering state.

News of th' event, with very short delay,
Some tongues to David in his wilds convey,
From which he finds that Abigail's become
The sole possessor of herself and home,
And, by a kind and providential deed,
The fetter's broke.—Thus all completely freed,
And all without the crime he had design'd,
It struck with force his ruminating mind ;
On which he said : “ Blest be the Lord of life,
Who has been pleased thus to suppress the strife,

To stay my passions from a rash design,
And free my conscience from so black a crime,
And yet in mercy, and paternal care,
To strike the guilty, and the righteous spare,
For which my heart in gratitude shall raise
Rev'rential thanks, and sing the song of praise."

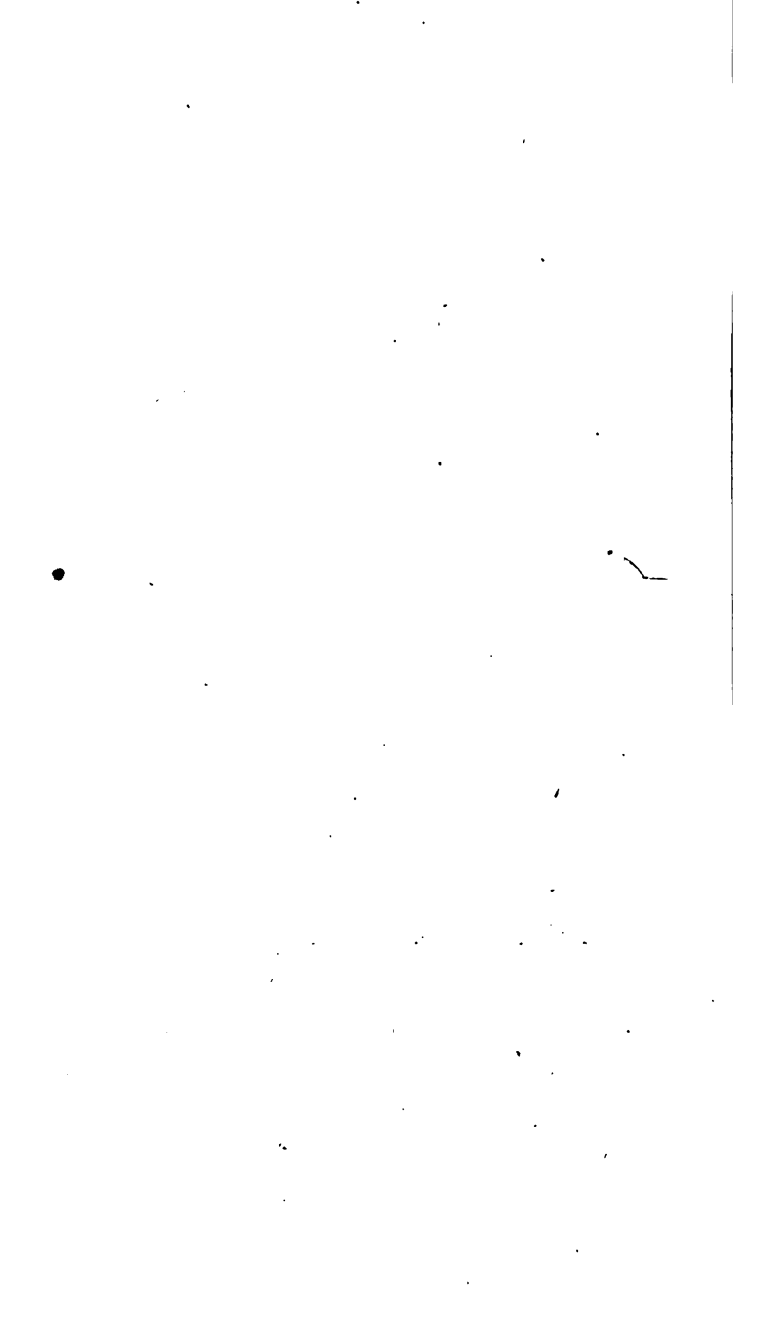
David ere long recall'd the fine display
Of female charms upon a recent day,
When Abigail (the widow now become)
Check'd his designs against herself and home ;
Her winning graces, in the look serene—
Her comely aspect—dignity of mien—
Her prudent conduct—flowing eloquence,
And solid wisdom in her just defence ;
Nor last, nor least, her final words renew,
As if still sounding, and she still in view,
When thus she closed : " And when these come
to thee,
This day recall—and then remember me."

Thus all conspired impressions to renew,
So strong imprinted in that interview,
And made him judge, when centred in a wife,
They promised comforts in domestic life.
His pleasing fancy thus dwells on her charms,
And, unrestrain'd, his ardent bosom warms,
For what opposed and had debarr'd before
Was now removed, and she a wife no more ;

And hence no object his desire denies
T'indulge a lover's flame, and gain the prize.
He then with her communed—his love exprest
And soon the charms he thus admired, possest,
For her late admiration quickly moved
Her breast to love where she was so beloved ;
When ere 'twas long, the left and lonely dame
Renounced the widow, and the wife became.

Thus turn'd events—thus one another crost,
A wife to gain for one so lately lost ;
One to fill up the tender soothing part,
For one so robb'd of—one so near his heart—
His dearest Michal, who at Saul's command
Was in his absence given to Phalti's hand,
Where hopeless seem'd the chance that ever more
Time would the object of his love restore ;
But things afresh revolved, and Phalti lost
The prize he had obtain'd at David's cost,
For revolutions once again restored
The envied female to her pristine Lord.

END OF BOOK THE FOURTH.



D A V I D.



Book the Fifth.

ARGUMENT.

The Zophites again inform of David.—Saul pursues him with three thousand men.—David and Abishai visit Saul's camp, and find all asleep.—They, unobserved, take his spear and cruise of water.—David returns, and at a distance reprimands Abner.—Saul calls out, acknowledges his son in a repentant state of mind, and blesses him.—David goes with two wives to Gath, and obtains Ziklag to reside in, from whence he makes a war-excursion into a neighbouring state, and returns with much spoil.—The Philistines again at war.—King Achish claims David's assistance against his own country, but he is relieved by the discontent of the assisting nobles.—David and his men return towards their home at Ziklag.—They find it destroyed, with all their wives and treasure gone, and none left to give account.—They follow, and at last recover all.—Saul prepares to meet the Philistine army, but is discouraged at their appearance.—In this strait he consults the witch of Endor.—Is informed there of his dismal situation and future prospect; yet he persists, and engages the enemy.—They overcome him, and himself and three sons are slain in the field of battle.—The pagan forces thus becoming masters, repeople the deserted cities.

DAVID.

Book the Fifth.

Not long had David his new bride enjoy'd,
Before fresh broils their nuptial bliss annoy'd.
A second time the Zophites now resort,
Officious meddlers ! to disturb the court,
And tell where David and his little host,
His close adherents, hold their present post.
Saul takes the scent, and, to his fresh disgrace,
Uprises early to the brutal chase.
Three thousand men appear again in arms
Accountred quickly for renew'd alarms,
As if prepared in muster'd ranks to go
Against some potent and important foe ;
But vain—frail man !—thy strivings are in vain ;
Parade and strength thy end will never gain,
But from a feeble few thou shalt, in shame,
Lead back thy armies with degraded name.

David, apprized in his retired abode,
Sent forth his spies to learn what news abroad ;
Who back return'd, and with some terror said,
"That Saul and thousands o'er the land were
spread."

On this he hastes at even-tide away,
To find, in secret, how the forces lay,
Where he beholds the king ; and at his post
Abner, presiding captain of the host.
Within the trenches Saul lies on the ground,
And all his soldiers in a ring around.
This seen by David, he regains his post
And carries tidings to his little host ;
Then asks his men, who so courageous are
As dare attend him to the camp of war ?
When Abishai turns, with dauntless heart,
"I !—I am ready for the foremost part."

The twilight gone, the night its mantle spread
And stars alone were all the light to lead ;
Propitious hour to aid ;—no more delay,
But forth they ventured on their devious way ;
With cautious step, and with attentive ear,
The tents they visit, nor excite a fear,
For o'er the camp a deadly state they found,
As if some trance had seized the whole around,
Where a deep sleep, by supernatural power,
Had seal'd their eyes in that lethargic hour ;
Nor bark'd a dog, nor screech'd an owl, to wake
The slumbering soldiers an alarm to take.

Saul soundly slept, and by his senseless ear,
Stuck in the ground, erectly stood his spear.
Silence profound !—a favour'd moment now
To strike, unwarded, a decisive blow :
When Abishai soon the silence broke,
And gently whispering, thus to David spoke :
“ The Lord hath given thee now thy prostrate
foe ;

Give me the grant, and I will strike a blow,
With force that will no second effort need ;
For death, most certain, shall the stroke succeed.
“ No ! hold thy hand,” as quickly David said,
“ Forbear all rashness, though so fairly laid ;
For who can slay, without a sinful stain,
Whom God appoints, and whom anoints to reign ?
'Tis His prerogative ;—'tis His alone
To raise a monarch, or a king dethrone ;
Then be the deed his own ;—let us not dare
To interfere, or what He wills, debar ;
For in this confidence I fully rest,
He will the king of what he holds divest,
Relieve in time from all this hostile strife,
And Saul deprive of royalty and life.
Yet this I grant ; go, take the gilded spear
That by his head is pitch'd so very near,
And cruise of water too ; in proof to bring
How thus in mercy we have spared the king.”
Thus Abishai's hand was timely stay'd ;
Although reluctant, he the check obey'd,

But prompt to act, and spurning at delay,
He darted off, and snatch'd the spoils away ;
Past back unnoticed, like a shade withdrawn,
And left them slumbering till the peep of dawn.

Now David, soon as blush'd the early light,
Awoke the soldiers, in a general fright
To see, with mixture of surprise and fear,
Purloin'd, unseen, their master's cruise and spear ;
For now elate he mounts an eminence,
To aid his voice, and serve him for defence ;
From whence he calls, loud echoing, to the host,
Reminding Abner to attend his post.
He calls—but calls in vain ; asleep they lay,
Nor mind the summons, nor the dawning day.
He calls again ; when with the louder noise
Abner awakes, and hears a distant voice :
“ What voice is this ! says he, “ so loud to ring,
And break the slumbers of our weary king ? ”
When David thus, in reprimanding tone,
Again salutes the guardian of the throne :
“ Art thou not, Abner, in exalted post,
Both at the court and in the martial host ?
Why then neglectful of thy duty here,
To all endanger, as I make appear ?
For some this very night, unheard, unseen,
Within your camp, and near the king, have been,
Who at their will, by an unguarded stroke,
Might have dispatch'd him ere again he woke ;

As proof of which, see in my hand, are here,
Thy sovereign's cruise and his neglected spear.
For such supineness manifest in-you,
You stand condemn'd ;—and is not death your
 due,
Who thus in slumbers take your pleasing swing
Without regard to your anointed king ?”

Thus David spoke with elevated sound,
Heard by all parties now awoke around ;
When thus the king, in rapture and surprise,
“Is that my son ?—Is that my son ?”—he cries.
Quick David answers—“ Yes !—a son so near
As should be cherish'd, and as ever dear ;
Not lightly spurn'd and set at distance far,
An outcast exile, and pursued in war,
Like some chased hare, no resting place to know,
Or hunted partridge on the mountain's brow.
What have I done ?—what evil canst thou see
In all my actions or designs on thee ?
Hear then, I pray, thy servant's just request,
That all between us may be right redress'd.
If from the Lord this wrath be justly come,
And in chastisement my apportion'd doom,
An offering may that gracious power appease,
And my tried soul from all its griefs release :
But if from man these hostile deeds arise,
Be theirs the duty of the sacrifice,
To crave forgiveness from the throne of God,
Or bear the burden of his righteous rod ;

For why should I in fear of death thus stand,
Or, life to save, give up my native land,
My kind red, friends, and all endeared things,
(To peasants precious as to lords and kings,)
And seek a refuge in a gentile land
Where I can nothing of my own command ;
But may the worship of the Jews disown,
To serve their idols, and their gods unknown.
Then try no conquest o'er the weak to gain,
Thy royal robe with guiltless blood to stain ;
Nor yet a son and subject rashly send
In pagan bondage all his days to spend ;
But let my life and birth-right-freedom be
By thee preserved, as thine have been by me."

Thus David spoke, and in pathetic mood,
An humble suppliant to his father stood,
Who then by sudden better thoughts o'ercome,
Return'd this answer, and reversed his doom :
" Ah, I have sinn'd, my son ! my crime I see
Against my conscience, against God, and thee !
Pass by the error of my wayward will,
And for the future thou shalt know no ill.
I have err'd deeply—done a foolish part,
And keen remorse now overpowers my heart.
Return then freely, and thy life shall be
Dear in my sight as mine had been to thee."

Thus Saul's hard heart was for the moment
broke,
But yet again still doubting David spoke :

"Be this the case, well realized in thee,
And it shall meet a due return from me ;
Then be to all their faithfulness repaid,
And in oblivion be all error laid ;
May gracious heaven that mercy show to me
Which thus in sparing I have shown to thee,
That tribulations in my soul may cease,
And close their conflicts in the bonds of peace."

Now Saul again, prophetic, thus begun ;
"Mayst thou be blest in all, my faithful son :
Great things are thine ; though adverse winds
 assail,
Yet thou shalt prosper, and o'er all prevail."

The interview now ceased ; with good o'ercome,
Saul, more composed, his steps directed home.
Then David call'd for some young man to bear
Back to their camp the water-cruise and spear ;
But cautious still, and still with doubtings tost,
He turns, deep-musing, to rejoin his host.

As some lone vessel on the boist'rous main
Attempts each port's secure retreat to gain,
But knows not where, when baffled thus and tost,
To enter safely on the troubled coast ;
So David found it—so perplex'd to find
A quiet haven to repose his mind,
Had not that hand which stills the raging seas,
Oft laid the tempests, and commanded peace,

He never could have all his conflicts borne,
Nor look'd with hope to gain the promised throne :
" Sure it must be," he said, " that I must fall
Some day a victim by the hand of Saul ;
What then is better in the present hour
Than seeking refuge from some other power ;
E'en from Philistines will be better far
Than such a conflict, and unnatural war.
If then I fly, forced from my native soil,
I may the vengeance of the monarch foil,
For he will deem me then in measure lost
Beneath the banners of a foreign host,
Which more and more he fears, and never dare
Provoke their fury to engage in war.
Resolving thus, with just six hundred strong,
To Gath he goes, and leads his men along :
Dwells with king Achish, well protected here,
Blest with two wives to succour and to cheer.

Now when to Saul his watchful spies relate
David's transition to a foreign state,
He felt it grievous, but he here let fall
Thoughts of pursuit, and wisely gave up all ;
For though offended at the Gathian king,
Who David took beneath his sheltering wing,
Yet this affront he brook'd, as safer far
Than in resentment to provoke a war ;
But peace was short, for soon another cause
Produced fresh broils between these common
foes.

While many rounds the moon had run its course,
David remain'd in Gath, with all his force,
When, as in compliment, he thus address'd
His friend, the king, to grant him a request :
“ Ill it befits me, in this royal place,
To take such freedom, and the king disgrace,
As thus within these walls to stay so long,
And, too intrusive, court and city throng ;
Then be thou pleas'd some country town to give,
Where we apart in privacy may live,
Yet where no cause these favours may debar
Vouchsafed to me and to my men of war,
Nor intercept that aid which I can lend
As an auxiliar, though a feeble friend.”

At this request king Achish Ziklag gave
To suit his purpose, and his service save,
With which well-pleas'd, he thanks, and bends
him low;
Then chieftain, soldiers, and their baggage go.

Not long they dwelt, till David's active hand
Began a warfare in a neighbouring land.
Three states that join'd, and not extended far,
He now invaded in offensive war;
Inflicting death on all with rapid pace
'Till none survived it of the human race.
The sheep, the oxen, and the speckled deer
They drive before them, and the pastures clear.

These and their camels, with their loads of corn
And stores of treasure, are with triumph borne,
When Gath they enter, after all their toil,
And pay for favours with the ravaged spoil.
Or right or wrong, or unaggress'd, to slay,
We will not venture at this time to say :
If from self-will, we small reflection need
To stamp the slaughter as a cruel deed ;
But reasons might, to us unknown, have place,
To authorize to extirpate the race,
And done by second means, might only be
A just infliction by divine decree,
As Amalek for sin, by general death
To root their influence from a spot on earth ;
For sure that Power that had created all,
Had right to raise, or make a nation fall ;
And though the just might with the wicked go
As in one mass, and common lot of woe,
Yet here is not the end ;—the judge of all,
Deserts would balance though they thus might
fall,
And raise the righteous to be ever blest,
Freed from all sufferings in the realms of rest ;
While the vile sinner would be doom'd to go
To dwell in regions of eternal woe.
Thus He who life to every being gave,
Holds right to take it, or at will to save,
To end it singly, or, through mighty sway,
By any means to sweep a host away.

This right, by Etna's loud tremendous blast,
To lay a portion of the country waste ;
Its rolling lava and its flames employ
To works of man and human life destroy :
Thus by the earthquake stately towns o'erthrow,
And swallow thousands in the gulf below :
Thus raise the tempest with terrific sweep
To swell the billows of the briny deep,
And in the fury of the mountain wave
To snatch unnumber'd to a watery grave !

When Achish saw the treasures which they
bore,
The chief he question'd, " where they found the
store."

But David answer'd in evasive tale,
And had the art o'er Achish to prevail,
(At least to carry from suspicion clear,)
And still in favour as before appear,
For it was glozed, as he revealed the news,
As an incursion on some feeble Jews ;
Which seem'd to please, for thus the monarch cries:
" Against his own thus harsh in war to rise !
Then sure all Israel must abhor the hand,
And ever spurn him from their injured land !
Hence safe I keep him and his valiant host,
To guard my kingdom, and defend my coast."
He turn'd it so ;—but if of common sense,
He must have judg'd it to be mere pretence ;

Yet on reflection thus it suited best
To pass it by, and as a fact to rest,
And rather let a weakness be betray'd
Than risk a rupture where he wanted aid.

David must soon upon his trial stand,
To flinch—or fight against his native land ;
For the Philistines fierce on Israel rose
To meet the force of all they could oppose,
In which their king collected all his might,
Nor left unsummon'd who could aid the fight,
When from all parts the numerous succours pass,
Draw to one point, and form a powerful mass.
Thus many brooks from trivial springs begun,
Steal gurgling on, and half unnoticed run ;
But when accumulated, wide and deep,
Roll on majestic with o'erwhelming sweep.
King Achish now to David turns his mind,
In him th' "auxiliar and the friend" to find,
Whom he addresses thus : "The time is come
That I must call thee from thy private home,
For now our banners must unfurl in war,
And thy heroic deeds are known afar ;
Then raise the standard to thy Hebrew band,
And join the army under our command ;
Where let us see your matchless name is just,
And our dependence on an arm of trust."

Great was the strait that David now was in
Betwixt the monarch and rebellious sin ;

Hard to refuse so kind a friend in need,
But yet still worse to make his country bleed.
Thus for the present, then, he pass'd it by ;
“ Yes ;—you shall see on whom you may rely.”
The king returns : “ May'st thou transcend us far,
And I will raise thee in the ranks of war,
And at my court thou shalt high station claim,
Guard of my person, and of honour'd name.”

Dire aspect now of bloody war succeeds ;
Each lord his thousands to the contest leads,
While Achish follows, join'd by David's host,
In deep reflections and in musings lost.
Sad situation, David !—straits combine !
What can relieve thee but a power divine ?
What but that God who hitherto hath been
An arm to save in many a trying scene ?
Yes—here He rose just at the point again
To turn the balance, and prevent the stain.
In pagan lords He raises discontent,
And by this means prevents the fear'd event.
Unlook'd-for stop !—Now all is bustle seen ;
Close consultations pass the lords between,
For looking round, they see with jealous fear
A host of strangers that compose the rear.
“ What mean these Hebrews,” they offended say,
Who thus intrude, and join in war's array ?”

The king, excusing and explaining, said :
“ Our friends they are, and David at their head ;

David the brave, late servant unto Saul,
But now my helper, whom to war I call :
For all the time that he hath been with me
I could no error in his conduct see,
But found him always in adherence strong,
And one to whom victorious deeds belong."

Firm was the answer, yet it did not please ;
The princes still could not proceed with ease :
Dissatisfied—they thus express'd their pain :
"Nay, let this Hebrew back return again ;
Send him and his to take their former post,
And free from murmurs thy devoted host,
For sure misconduct we too late may know,
If to the battle he has leave to go ;
For, though his actions and his speech are fair,
Yet how uncertain in the test of war,
Where he may soon, when all engaged contend,
Turn from our interest, and the Jews befriend,
For how can he the favour lost regain
By surer means than by our army slain ?
And near attachments must his mind command
With a strong influence to his native land,
Where early friends and all his kindred live,
The strongest bias to his wish do give ;
And where e'en matrons could in songs maintain,
'Saul had his thousands, he ten thousands slain ;'
And at this day high honours mark his name,
When even children lisp his glowing fame.

In such an one who then can trust repose,
To fight his friends, and aid their common foes,
Without those fears that confidence debar,
Of traitor-conduct in the heat of war?"

Enough was said ; he found it would not do
To press the stranger to the field to go ;
Against his will he therefore now address'd
His Hebrew friend, and thus his mind express'd :
" Long have I known thee, or at home, or far,
A faithful person, both in peace and war ;
Yet know my lords in sentiment combine,
And as one man thy friendly aid decline,
Then calmly leave our too suspicious host,
And take the station of thy former post.
Peace go with thee ; whom purely I release
That discord may within our army cease,
And heart and hand we may united go
To take the field against our common foe."

Well-pleased was David at the fair relief ;
Yet joy dissembling, thus he feign'd his grief :
" But say, O king ! why am I sent away,
And not to share the glories of the day ?
What have I done while I have spent my days
Within thy realm, disquietudes to raise ?
Have I not lived, when we could peace enjoy,
In quiet life, nor been the least annoy ;
Yet when required gone freely into war,
And deck'd with trophies thy triumphant car ?"

“ Yes ;”—Achish soon in answer thus proceeds ;
“ Yes ! well I know thy meritorious deeds :
Or in the war, or when at peace, ’tis due
To grant thy conduct has been ever true ;
Yes, gratitude I largely owe to thee,
For as an angel thou hast been to me,
And my regard in future shall appear ;
But from my lords I cannot banish fear,
For they determine, and they let me know,
That thus to battle they will never go.
Then soon as morning gilds with early red,
Let all arise and then thy soldiers lead ;
Be far departed, ere full light of day,
That our vast armies may no more delay.”

Thus urged again, but as reluctant still,
He yields with honour to the sovereign’s will.
They part ;—king Achish to the princes goes,
And acquiescing, seals a night’s repose ;
Whilst grateful David feels a thankful heart
Thus from his friend in his goodwill to part,
And be excused to raise his trembling hand
Against the armies of his native land.

A peaceful night they spent ; and when the
morn
First streak’d the clouds with oriental dawn,
Glad of their freedom, they forsook the bed,
And brush’d the dew, as their commander led,

To the whole band it was a glad retreat,
For each had felt a loyal bosom beat,
And spurn'd the thought that in a pagan cause
They should their country and their arms oppose.
Such their relief—such their united joy ;
But ah, how soon it meets a sad alloy !
Short-sighted man ! Things pleasant oft appear,
While scenes of grief await him very near.

Three days they march'd oppress'd with heat
and toil,
Before they trod upon the wish'd-for soil ;
Yet lively was their march, as now so far
They turned their footsteps from the dreaded war,
And saw prospective, as they thought, to cheer
Their wives, their mansions, and their children
near.

They thought how pleasant it would be to come
So unexpected to their friends at home,
Who knew not then but they were distant far
Amidst the perils incident to war,
Where in their conflicts many might be slain,
Ne'er to be welcomed to their arms again.
But sad reverse !—no wife, no children were
Left there to greet them, nor a home to cheer !

As Ziklag they approach, behold arise
Volumes of smoke aspiring to the skies !
Sad omen to their fears !—fears crowd apace
As nearer they advance and see the place ;

For fire and ruins now compose the whole
From street to street, and end to end of all ;
And what adds more, their ears no tongues assail
Left to report, and tell the mournful tale.

Wives !—children !—friends !—not left a single
one,

But all destroy'd, or with their treasures gone !
Lamented desolation !—sad to find,
Where every horror crowds upon the mind.
What could they do ? In anguish they lament ;
They dread, they weep, and mourn the sad
event ;

With hopeless woe and briny floods complain,
'Till tears no longer in their founts remain :
But of the sufferers David is the chief,
From outward trials, and from inward grief.
Two wives he lost, two lovely females there ;
If slain he knows not, nor if captives, where ;
If captive slaves, imagination draws
In strongest colours their mysterious woes,
And makes him leave no horrid thought behind
To rouse and harass his pathetic mind.

But in addition to this piercing woe
It is his portion other ills to know ;
The very men who his companions are,
Whom he befriended or in peace or war,
Now charge him rashly as the only cause
From whence these suff'rings to their lot arose ;
Why loss of wives, of children, stores, and all
Should thus disast'rous to their portion fall ;

And even threaten in rebellious strife,
To rudely stone him, and to take his life.
What wounds more piercing can the thought
devise

Than to this sufferer thus combined arise ?
Where can he fly to spread his rending grief ?
From whence draw sympathy, or find relief ?
'Tis not to men his prospect now extends,
For these have left him, both of foes and friends ;
But still the righteous, though forsook of all,
And low prostrated, meet no final fall ;
For that just God, who takes impartial scan
Will never leave the humble-hearted man,
Forsake that soul that doth sincerely prove
Its fear, its zeal, its reverence, and love.
To this strong tower, which can all tempests
brave,

Protect the helpless, and the sufferer save,
He turns at once his deeply wounded mind,
The safest counsel and support to find.
Abiathar he calls, who now was there,
And held an Ephod in his sacred care,
Then humbly thus enquires : " Shall I pursue ?
Or what, O Father ! wouldst thou have me do ?"
The answer comes ;—" Arise ! be quick, pursue—
And thou shalt rescue what belongs to you."

Each man, elate, with confidence now rose,
And march'd with vigour to o'ertake their foes ;

But in their speed two hundred, sick or lame,
At Besor's brook unfit to ford became ;
Who halting staid, and near that stream abode,
Unable further to pursue the road :
The rest, four hundred strong, who strength
 maintain,
Pass on, courageous, all the lost to gain.

As thus they went, within a field they found
A man exhausted, stretch'd along the ground,
Whom they recruit with liquor, figs, and cake,
Through which his senses by degrees awake.

David in haste interrogating spoke,
When by degrees he got the youth to talk.
" From whence art thou ?" he said, " whose suffering son,
In state so wretched, and thus left alone ?"
" I am," says he, in weak and faltering voice,
" A lost Egyptian, whom you make rejoice ;
For here three tedious nights have I thus past,
And now I thought I nearly breathed my last ;
But thus recover'd by your friendly care,
I feel the good, and you shall have my prayer,
For by your aid I hope again to stand,
And reach the confines of my native land.
I am a youth, and uninured to war,
Late the dear object of a mother's care ;
Since which with an Amalekite I've lived,
And cruel usage at his hand received.

By his command, with many more in arms,
We left our homes to carry war's alarms ;
Whose depredations many lands have shorn,
From whence vast captives are exulting borne.
Poor Ziklag's buildings low in ashes lay,
And all the people far are dragg'd away,
Thus, on return, I fainted with the toil,
And stopt behind the moving field of spoil,
Where, hard to tell, my master and the host
Pass'd joyous on, and left me to be lost !"

The youth here closed ; when on the cheek
appears

Expressive language in his copious tears,
Which now in David tender feelings bred,
And at the tale he tears responsive shed.
He dash'd them off ; then question'd : " Canst
thou say

What road they took, and where they halting lay ?"

The youth return'd : " If thou wilt only swear
To be my safe-guard, and my life to spare,
Both from the men and from my Master's hand,
I soon will bring thee to the hostile band."

This promptly done ;—they anxious post away
To where th' invaders and the captives lay ;
Where now, behold ! wide o'er the ground,
outspread,

A merry life the rude free-booters lead ;
Big with the spoils, they dance in jovial glee,
And eat and drink, nor ill nor danger see,

Nor feel a dread, while fuming wines their cheeks,
Though retribution is to them so near !

Beholding now a quick approaching host,
Their mirth is quash'd, and in confusion lost !
All consternation ! and in sad dismay,
They eager try to speed in flight away ;
But unavailing ;—their pursuers gain
And spread the country with a mass of slain.
None of the whole survived this scene of dread,
Except some youths, who on their camels fled,
Of whom four hundred took their flight away,
The sword escaping of that vengeful day,

Grateful this rescue to each captive wife,
To gain her husband, and preserve her life ;
David his share enjoy'd, by two restored
With heartfelt transports by their conquering lord.
All thus relieved, they lightly trip along
With arms enlink'd, and harmony of song ;
For songs of thanks to heaven are warmly paid
On such deliverance through its signal aid.
Thus on they pass'd, and on the camels bore
A mass of treasures of enriching store,
And where their own so fully were reclaim'd,
No child was missing, nor a lamb was lamed.

Thus oft the solar rays their brightness shroud
Behind the denseness of a hovering cloud ;

But past away, the cheering beams again
Burst in full splendour, and illumine the plain:

On near approaching to the winding bed
Of the brook Besor, where the feeble staid,
They soon beheld the sickly tribe appear
To meet the warriors with a welcome cheer,
Whom David greeted, like the soldier, brave,
Bold for the fight, but ever-quick to save:
Not so too many of his selfish crew,
Who, narrow-minded, thus their tempers shew:
“For these,” they say, “who loiter, ’tis not fair
They should a portion of the treasures share;
Their wives and children safe and well restored,
Is all the conquest should, of right, afford:
With these recover’d from the grasping foe,
Let them be grateful, and contented go.”
“Not so, my brethren,” David firmly said,
“Let upright justice be to all display’d;
For it is wrong the weaker to debar
Of due proportion of the fruits of war.
They have their needful use—they guard the
store;
They do their utmost—we do nothing more:
Nor would it prove to heaven a grateful sense
In due return for such deliverance:
Then be it hence—who by the stuff remain
Shall with the fighters equal portion gain.

Thus it was settled ;—when ere long they come
Again to Ziklag, late their pleasing home ;
But now its ruins can no more delight,
For every object but appals the sight.

Now David sends, out of the treasures found,
Gifts in remembrance to his friends around ;
To city-elders, towns, and country far
Distributes wide the trophy-spoils of war ;
And these he might with lib'ral hand afford,
As vast was gain'd above their own restored,
For these marauders, with rapacious hands,
Had ranged and ravaged over other lands.
Along with these he bids the bearers say,
“ These are the emblems of a favour'd day,
In which to us our all has been restored
From the contemners of our gracious lord.”

Thus having view'd the great Philistine host,
Which of its king, its lords and men, could boast ;
Seen Ziklag burnt, to David what befall,
We now return to trace the deeds of Saul ;
A mournful tale ! a scene of sanguine strife,
Where all was lost, and with that loss—his life !

While this fall'n monarch saw the hostile band
Approach his confines, and invade his land,
In dubious state (though on high ground) he
stood,
Palsied with fears, and destitute of good ;

E'en like some noble oak, of stature high,
Bereaved of verdure—wither'd—sapless—dry ;
Left to himself, he now, from near and far,
Muster'd his forces for the field of war,
A num'rous host, a powerful mass in arms,
Enough in view to far diffuse alarms;
Yet chief they lack'd an aid above their own,
A heavenly blessing, their success to crown.

To mount Gilboa now they march'd away,
Near which, wide stretch'd, the strong Philis-
tines lay ;
But when the king beheld their spreading host,
He inward trembled and his might was lost.
Sad was his state ! for now, bereft of all,
He knew not where for better help to call :
Deserted by his long forbearing God,
He found no counsel—but he found a rod.
Dead too was Samuel and at rest on high,
To whom the king no longer could apply,
And witch and wizard had, throughout the land,
Been slain or banish'd by his late command,
That none, except a secret few, remain
To deal in charms and spells for guilty gain ;
Yet one last shift, and that a dark one too,
Bewilder'd now he tries, events to know.
He calls his servants ; bids them try to find
Some sorceress noted for her magic mind,
That in this strait he may for counsel see,
And find what steps to take—and what will be.

His servants, musing, thus return again :
“ By thy command, but few of these remain ;
Yet there is one, but we forget her name,
Who lives at Endor, high in private fame.”
This pleased the king, who in a strange disguise,
With two to join him, quick to Endor flies,
And as befits what will not bear the light,
They seek her dwelling in the gloom of night.
Thus Saul to her : “ By thy familiar aid,
Be pleased to bring one from among the dead,
That by his service I some light may gain
On things of moment, which obscure remain.”

The old-versed heroine in the magic art,
Returns this answer from a fearful heart :
“ Dost thou not know our sad disastrous state,
What dire decrees have gone from Saul of late,
How the magicians, at his high command,
Are extirpated over all the land ;
And wouldst thou then thus tempt, and thus
prepare
For me a certain and a fatal snare ?”
But anxious Saul, to soothe her doubting mind,
Now boldly swears, “ she shall no trouble find ;
No future danger shall the act succeed
Of such a kindness, in his time of need.”
So satisfied, she thus address'd the king,
“ Whom, then to serve thee, shall I try to bring ?”
Saul answers quickly : “ Haste to bring to me
The prophet Samuel. Him I wish to see.”

All-anxious now he stood to see him rise,
When loud, as frighten'd, the spell-monger cries ;
“ Why hast thou thus deceived me—thus to call
In false pretence, when thou thyself art Saul ?”
“ Fear not, for nothing is to fear,” says he ;
“ But what didst thou, to so surprise thee, see ?”
“ See !” says the woman, “ wonders I have seen,
E'en gods ascending heaven and earth between ;
A man, too, rising with the marks of age,
Clad in a mantle—and in look a sage !”

Saul, now convinced that this was Samuel's
shade,
Bow'd down in rev'rence, and obeisance made ;
And whilst his quivering limbs his horror speke,
This question sternly from the spectre broke :
“ What ails thee now ? what is the urgent cause
That thus thou call'st me from my blest repose ?”

With faltering voice Saul in return-exprest :
“ Because, unaided, I am sore distrest ;
For the Philistines, in terrific band,
Lie on the confines of our trembling land,
And now the Lord will no petition hear,
Nor favour grant by vision, priest, or seer ;
Then in these straits, which thus occur to me,
My rack'd attention has been 'turn'd to thee,
In humble hope that thou wilt please to shew
What line of conduct I had best pursue.

Thus spoke the king, o'ercome with anxious
fear,

When this dread answer strikes his startled ear :

“ If then the Lord reject all prayer from thee,

How canst thou look for thy relief from me ?

But hearken to my voice ; thy sentence hear,

And learn events which are, alas ! so near ;

For the predictions thou hast heard before,

Are now fulfilling ; thou art blest no more !

For thy misconduct, thy high-favoured throne

Is now devolving unto Jesse's son,

Because thou hast, with overbearing breast,

Too often slighted the Divine behest.

Remember Amalek—where His command

Was strict to conquer, and destroy the land ;

Yet thou wouldst not the high design fulfil,

But sparedst at pleasure to thy stubborn will.

For this, and such too oft repeated deeds,

Thy forfeit of the sacred throne succeeds,

Which shall be rent from thee, and thou shalt
know

Who reigns above, and rules o'er all below,

Who has decreed that thy long-favour'd host

Shall be defeated and in battle lost ;

That heathen powers shall bear superior sway,

To capture thousands, and unnumber'd slay ;

In which dire conflict thy three sons shall fall

Lamented victims by their father Saul,

When thou shalt follow, and thy mortal breath

Be closed to morrow in untimely death !”

The apparition ceased ;—then vanish'd sight,
Dissolving quickly in the shades of night !

As death pronounced in human courts of law,
Thrills through the culprit with o'erwhelming
awe ;

So came this sentence from the gloomy shade,
And such impression on the monarch made ;
For, conscious of desert, he look'd on all
As certain on his guilty head to fall.
Thus struck, his limbs enfeebled so became,
They could no longer prop his shatter'd frame,
But faint he fell, that all around dismay'd,
And, trembling, then in dumb prostration laid.

As Saul in stupor thus made earth his bed,
Almost departing to the silent dead,
Th' enchantress o'er him all assiduous bends,
And to his sufferings ready care extends,
Whom then in plaintive tone she thus address :
“ Thou know'st, my Lord, that I have done my
best,

Obey'd with promptness thy supreme command,
And my life ventured in thy sacred hand ;
And much for thee I wish'd for better things,
But crosses come to all—and e'en to kings.
Then be thou pleased to listen to my prayer,
Whilst for thy good I am concern'd to care,
And let me now some needful food supply,
For thou seem'st almost on the point to die ;

Then freely take the best my board can give,
That it may cheer thee, and my king may live.

A kind proposal ; yet so great his grief,
No service can afford the least relief :
He all refuses in his faint replies,
And still prostrated, sunk in horror lies.
At last his servants anxiously unite,
And with their hostess, urge—persuade—invite.
He yielded then ; when with the greatest speed
The fatted calf is made for him to bleed ;
The cakes are baked, and of the sav'ry meat
Saul and his servants at one table eat.

The king refresh'd, his spirits came again,
And somewhat blunted the keen edge of pain ;
But transient ease ! for soon the galling smart
Return'd o'erwhelming, and o'erpower'd his
heart.

The evening came ;—fit season for their flight,
When they arose, and took the aid of night ;
And while the darkness added to the gloom
The worn-down monarch reach'd his cheerless
home.

The night in sore disquietude was spent,
And fearful bodings of the day's event.
Sad was his state indeed !—what could he do ?
The prospect dark whate'er he might pursue :

If they retreat, the great Philistine band
Will carry conquest over all the land,
And he himself, to seal his final doom,
Must forfeit life, or a bond-slave become :
And yet to venture such a force to brave,
Seemed like descending to a general grave,
Which he may deem as sure, if he can hold
Faith in the witch, and what her scenes unfold.

At length was spent the tedious doubting night,
And passing moments brought the dreaded light.
Oft in the conflict were his thoughts convey'd
To what had issued from the spectre-shade,
Which sometimes chill'd his tost and wavering
mind ;

Yet such reflections he would cast behind,
Hoping some error or some cheat had been
Imposed upon him in that mystic scene,
That if deluded, he may never see
The ills predicted, or in less degree.

Awful dilemma now the king was in,
From disobedience and rebellious sin !
Nice was the balance poised ; sometimes to
dare—

Then to retract, and back recoil at war.
Though wavering thus, decision came at last,
When pond'rous war the beam in favour cast.

Command went forth—roll'd like some rapid
stream,

When, all in motion, arms and armour gleam !
They meet in rage ; and, swell'd with martial
fire,

Shower their arrows, and explode their ire.
On mount Gilboa hard the battle runs,
Where first king Saul laments three slaughter'd
sons,

Of whom his hapless Jonathan is one,
Thus slain—thus lost—and ere his father gone.
But now comes Saul himself the force to feel
Of the barb'd weapons of Philistine steel ;
The swift-wing'd arrows quiver in his side,
And blood fresh issues in a streaming tide ;
Yet on the mountain still pursued, he flies,
Till spent, he falters, and he nearly dies ;
When to his armour-bearer, " Take," says he,
" Thy sword and quench the little life in me,
Lest the uncircumcised should pierce me through,
And add this triumph to my lot of woe."
But here the man refused the sanguine deed,
To make his monarch, though thus dying, bleed ;
Hence Saul himself upon a weapon cast,
Pierced his own heart, and, groaning, breathed
his last!

When the page saw his royal master dead,
He quickly follow'd, and as rashly bled ;

With his own weapon gave himself a stroke,
Fell to the ground, and never more awoke.

Thus closed the day, wherein at once were
lost

A king—three princes—and a powerful host!
Soon as the morning light excelled the star,
The conquerors ravage o'er the field of war,
Select among the slain the sire and sons,
While joyous triumph through the army runs.
Saul's head they sever from his stately frame—
Tear off his armour—stigmatize his name—
And to each temple, for their Idols famed,
Send the glad news to be aloud proclaim'd,
Whilst the poor mangled corpse, bestript of all,
They fix in gibbet to a lofty wall.
But when the men of Jabesh-gilead heard
How the remains of all the princes fared,
The valiants rose, as sunk the solar light,
And all recover'd in the dead of night,
Bore them far hence, as relics they held dear,
And gave the bones a highly-honour'd bier;
While seven full days the duteous subjects keep
A solemn fast, and o'er their ashes weep.

Now when the cities, near the vanquish'd
host,
Beheld the overthrow, and all so lost,

Depopulation widely spreading ran,
Till a whole city scarcely held a man,
Which to th' invaders now defenceless fall,
And they re-people, as the lords of all.

END OF BOOK THE FIFTH.

D A V I D.

Book the Sixth.

ARGUMENT.

A man, returned from the battle, informs David of the great defeat, and of his putting the king finally to death, at his own request.—Being proved so far a murderer, and that of a king, by his own confession, he is executed for it.—David's lamentation for the death of Saul and Jonathan.—David is Divinely directed to go up to Hebron; he goes; is kindly received, and finally crowned king there.—He finds the remains of Saul, Jonathan, &c. and gives them honourable attention—Ishbosheth is made king over Israel, by Abner's influence.—This produces war between the two parties.—The two opposing captains, Abner and Joab, set twelve men on each side to wrestle, from which they proceed to real animosity, and each man kills his fellow.—Their general forces then engage through irritation.—Abner and his men are obliged to give way, and flee.—Being closely pursued, Abner slays Azahel in self-defence.—The captains exchange sentiments, and agreeing on their folly, the contest ceases.—Abner revolts from Ishbosheth, carries over his influence to David, and restores Michal to him.—Joab assassinates Abner.—David attends his funeral under deep sorrow, and with lamentation.—Two assassins murder Ishbosheth upon his bed, for which they are beheaded.—David is now solicited by Israel to be their king also.—He accepts, and thereby comes now into full and quiet possession of the united kingdom, as it had been held by Saul.

DAVID.

Book the Sixth.

On David now again our thoughts renew,
To bring fresh matters to historic view,
Where a deep int'rest our attention draws
To mark the progress of this man of woes.

Two single days had only pass'd between
His reaching Ziklag, and this sanguine scene,
In which Gilboa saw its fatal plain
With Hebrews cover'd, by Philistines slain,
When on the third, escaping from the host,
A man came quick, to tell how all was lost !
With clothes all rent, and ashes on his head,
He bowed in rev'rence, and thus, throbbing, said :
“ To thee, my Lord, unwelcome news I bear
Of slaughtering conflicts in the field of war,

Where, sad to tell, our grand imperial host
Has been defeated—and our all is lost !
When thousands bled on Mount Giboa's plain,
And in that number is our monarch slain !
Whose sons also their father's portion share,
Alike the victims of this fatal war."

Thus he ; when David quick return'd again,
" But how know'st thou the royal house is slain ?"
The youth returns : " Because I chanced to be
Upon the mountain, and the deeds to see.
Shot by the archers, there our sovereign Saul
Lean'd on his spear, just at the point to fall,
While their pursuers hard their chariots drove,
Press'd to his death, and for that honour strove ;
When seeing me, and wounded and distress,
He call'd in haste, and made this last request :
" Come quick, young man, in kindness end my
 pain,
For I am wounded, and am nearly slain ;
I cannot back my sinking life recall,
Then better quickly than thus lingering fall ;
Or by the hands of infidels be slain,
To quit my bondage from this world of pain."
Convinced in full that he could not survive
His bleeding wounds, nor long be kept alive,
I then, to close the sad conflicting strife,
Quickly extinguish'd the last spark of life,
Before th' unhallow'd could, with all their speed,
Obtain the triumph as a glorious deed :

Then to secure his crown, I stripp'd his head,
Which, with the bracelets, at thy feet is laid."

David on this, consider'd all as true,
For these rich spoils, so often seen, he knew ;
When overcome with grief, his robe he tore,
And all around alike their tokens bore ;
Then fast and weep for Israel that lay
In such destruction, till the close of day ;
But chief for Saul, and Jonathan the son,
Their tears in currents in remembrance run.

Now David calls the Boor who brought the
news

And questions thus, as great dislike he shews :

"From whence, and what art thou?"—The
trembling youth

Displeasure boding, tells this simple truth :

"Thy servant, though in war, has no command ;
A stranger there ; and Amalek my land."

Enough was said ; it raised the stern rebuke,
Which the quash'd youth with chilling horror
shook,

As David thus : "What!—lift thy murd'rous
sword

Against th' anointed, and our rightful lord ?

Thou'rt self-condemn'd, nor canst the truth
deny ;

Blood calls for blood, and thou shalt promptly
die !"

This said ; all pleadings were but spent in
vain ;

It was commanded, and the man was slain !

What summ'ry justice ! if that term be due,
But where is justice, when so rash he slew ?
When punishment is just, how clearly right,
On life and death, to bring the whole to light ;
On every side deliberate proofs to hear,
That truths confronted may condemn or clear.
Ah ! how far short of our enlighten'd land,
Where on fair trial all securely stand,
Where e'en the great for such an act would know
The equal justice of the British law ;
And where the meanest no rash judgment fears,
Tried in cool process by his fellow-peers.
Had this been so, we should have seen prevail
More lenient measures on the hasty tale ;
Death to be spared ;—yet punishment ensue
As proofs condemned, and to the crime was due.

No rest can David from his sorrows find,
For now the royal deaths depress his mind ;
When, as some vent, he thus, in plaintive strain,
Bemoans his father and his brother slain :
“ Oh Israel ! how are thy beauties fled,
Thy mighties fallen, and thy worthies dead !
Oh Saul and Jonathan ! how hard with you
Abrupt to part, and bid a last adieu !

In life alike you chaer'd the scene around,
And now in dying both as one are found.
High was thy stature, Saul, of noble mien,
And on thy brow true majesty was seen ;
Strong was thy arm, it knew the sword to wield,
Or promptly handle the protecting shield,
Which oft in contest energy display'd,
O'erpower'd the powerful, and a host dismay'd,
When on return from feats display'd afar,
Thy name was blazon'd as the chief in war.
Swift like the eagle—as the lion brave,
Thou faced the mighty, yet wast prone to save.

Ah ! may thy mountain, great Gilboa, stand
A lasting token to surrounding land ;
For never may descend on thee again
The fertilizing and salubrious rain ;
May never from thy tops the dews arise,
Nor smoke of offerings fumigate the skies ;
For on thy base thou hast all thirsty stood,
Imbibing currents of the royal blood ;
Hast borne him suffering on thy tainted soil,
As if ne'er hallowed by the sacred oil.

Tell not in Askelon the tragic woe,
Nor let in Gath the vaunting people know,
Lest these Philistines, with triumphant voice,
Proclaim the deed, and o'er the slain rejoice,
Sing songs exulting o'er the Prince and Saul,
And join in chorus that the mighty fall ;

For thus in battle are together gone
A royal father, and a worthy son !
Then Israel, weep ! ye daughters, weep o'er Saul,
For see in him the chief of warriors fall,
The pride of Israel's long triumphant host,
To his dread army and the kingdom lost.
Weep then, ye daughters, for your friend was
Saul ;
Mourn o'er his ashes, and his worth recall,
Who deck'd you with the gayest flowers to vie,
Of scarlet tincture and of crimson dye,
Who did your necks and arms with gifts adorn
Of sparkling diamonds, and of brilliant stone.
Mourn then the slaughter, which produced the
end
Of such a noble and a liberal friend ;
Nor more let music raise the mirthful sound,
But on the willows hang your harps around.

For thee, my Jonathan ! my brother—friend—
How beats my heart when thus I mourn thy end !
Untimely slain upon thy native land,
By an unhallow'd and a pagan hand.
Great were thy actions with the spear and shield,
By deeds of valour in th' embattled field ;
The noble warrior was in thee complete,
Who joy'd to spare more than to gain defeat.
For though the bravest in the field of fight,
Yet tender mercies were thy chief delight,

Triumphing not with fierceness o'er thy foe
When thou hadst made him to thy prowess bow.
Sweet was thy friendship, ever prone to prove
In warmth more ardent than a woman's love.
How then can I but mourn th' untimely end
Of such a brother—such a son, and friend?
Flow then my tears, and all a silence keep,
Whilst for such worth I now resign to weep;
But weep all round, for you have also lost
A king, three princes, and a powerful host!

Thus with keen feelings David mourn'd the fall
Of his loved brother, and his father Saul;
But lapse of time wore off the edge of grief;
For with the loss he witness'd great relief,
As restless Saul was now to silence gone,
And left his palace, with a vacant throne.

Now on fresh ground our rising hero stands,
Where such a state the greatest care demands,
Lest by wrong movements he may mar the whole,
And warp the purpose of succeeding Saul.
Aware that wisdom and the will of man
Were insufficient future deeds to plan,
The Lord he ask'd, with humble mind, to shew
What were the movements he should next pursue;
Who condescended to the meek request,
And thus the suppliant with an answer blest:
"Go up to Judah. For some time to come
In Hebron dwell, and let it be thy home."

Quick at command, he now prepares to go,
His wives, his household, and his army too,
And as he knows the best of Friends approves,
He feels a peace as he obedient moves,
Though in the dark, as nothing now was shown,
To light his footsteps, or his wishes crown ;
But in the faith he acts, in God his trust,
As best becomes the erring sons of dust.
How blest that faith !—Arrived, he made a stand,
As this completed the Divine command,
When lo ! all Judah, as with one accord,
Arise to greet him as their welcome lord ;
To Hebron their united suffrage bring,
And joyous crown him their adopted king !

Hail, favoured man !—all oppositions fall,
And thus thou risest to the seat of Saul :
No more the shepherd's wreath around shall
twine

Thy manly temples, for a crown is thine !
A diadem shall now supply its place,
Thy brows encircle with becoming grace,
And for the crook, thy elevated hand'
Shall sway a sceptre with supreme command.

Thus over Judah raised, they all enrol
As faithful subjects, and at his control.
In kingly state, on elevated ground,
Wide he surveys the prostrate realm around,

Where all as in one simultaneous strain
Hail the bright aspect of his future reign.
Propitious era!—how these prospects yield
For useful labour an expanded field ;
Nor were they view'd in vain, for David's sight
Beheld them quickly in their proper light.
He first essays a code of laws to give
That all may prosper, and as brethren live,
Himself as head, for that important end
Become their leader, guardian, king, and friend ;
Thus manifesting in a striking light,
That their kind suffrage had been fix'd aright,

Tyrants may reign with arbitrary sway,
And trembling subjects may with fear obey,
Whilst mutual hatred, and a smothered spleen,
That gender discord, are too often seen ;
But this is not what stable comfort brings
To loyal subjects and trust-worthy kings.
A king should rule—but he should reign in love,
And as a father to his people prove ;
Correct their errors with convincing sway,
And be a pattern as he leads the way ;
For kings have much in charge, and much can do
By bright example, and by precept too.
Thus a good king diffuses far and near
A due deference, and a reverend fear ;
Lives in his subjects' love, and they sustain,
As faithful pillars, his magnan'mous reign.

Soon after David his high station gains
He is apprized of Saul's entomb'd remains,
That some of Jabesh-gilead, firm of-mind,
Had been disposed his valued bones to find,
And when arrested from the pagan hand,
To give them burial in his native land.
To these brave men he sends thus thanks to give :
"May you the blessing of the Lord receive,
For your attention, and your pious care,
In bold adventure Saul's remains to spare,
To free from such disgrace the royal line,
And rest his bones within a hallow'd shrine.
For such a deed a sure reward is due,
And I will grant it in remembering you,
For Saul now gone, the tribe of Judah bring
Their gen'ral suffrage, and adopt me king.
Then hold your valour, and united stand
The future bulwark of your natal land."

Thus glides the stream for Jesse's son to gain
The kingly throne without a member slain,
Enthroned o'er Judah, whilst in Israel came
A son of Saul's his regal right to claim,
The weak Ishbosheth, who assumes command,
Though quite unfit to rule so great a land ;
But raised by Abner, he obtains a weight,
And mounts the throne, as grasp'd by legal right,
For in descent he thus assuredly stood
First in alliance to the royal blood ;

And if time qualifies to take the stage,
He would seem ripe at forty years of age.

The land divided thus, there soon ensue
Opposing claims between the rival two,
Though short in durance, for two years were all
It hung in balance with the house of Saul.

The new made kings through Abner's measures jar,
And thus begins the life-existing war :
In Gibeon spreads a wide-extended pool,
Where crowds resort in gentle airs to cool,
Sit on its verge, as flows the circling wave,
Or languid limbs within its waters lave.
Here drawn one season, Abner took his post,
Himself to please, and to regale his host.
Here too came David's men and made a stand,
Led on by Joab, in his high command.
Thus on the banks opposed, the soldiers stood,
The only barrier the extended flood ;
When Abner from his side, aloud express'd,
Thus o'er the waters Israel's chief address'd :
" Hear, Joab, now ; let us not loiter here
With men of action pitch'd so very near,
But in some effort, some small exercise,
See where it is the greatest vigour lies ;
Send then some youths the circling pool around
To midway choose some favouring plot of ground,

Where equal numbers may their fellows try,
And show in whom the strongest sinews lie,
To whom the palm of merit may be due ;
If ours, to claim ; or give, if right, to you."

Joab, too proud the challenge to refuse,
Each party now twelve of their valiants choose,
Who eager join upon the sandy shore,
And meet, alas, to meet again no more !

Unwise attempt ! for though profess'd to play,
And by main strength alone to win the day,
Yet parties of two powers, they ticklish stood,
And what was peace at first might end in blood.
And so it proved : they first to play began,
But soon to discord and to rage it ran.
The passions rise, when to their arms they fly,
And, lion-like, all deadly efforts try ;
Each takes his fellow by the beard to wound,
And brings him fainting to th' impurpled ground,
Till ev'ry one, in this unhappy strife,
Wounds and is wounded, to the loss of life !

Dreadful rencounter ! for the whole to fall
In the first onset with the house of Saul ;
But here it ends not—for on either side
Alike aroused they spread the grievance wide.
"To arms ! to arms ! (rings through each
host with speed,)
And deal your vengeance for the sanguine deed.

Quickly they rise ;—and now is heard afar
The brazen clangour of destructive war :
Dire is the contest, till fierce Abner's train
Is forced to yield, so vast his numbers slain ;
When overcome, though great in war, and brave,
He tries by speed his doubtful life to save.
As thus he runs, a youth of noted flight,
Azahel, fitted or for race or fight
Pursues the flying chief, in pride to gain
So great a feat as such a warrior slain ;
But Abner quick on his pursuer turns,
Begs his forbearance, yet to touch him scorns ;
But when entreaties no attention gain,
He strikes—he wounds—and adds him to the
slain.

Thus laid the youth, fresh bleeding from the
spear,
As crowds come up, and drop the pitying tear ;
But Abner still hard press'd bends on his course
Quick to outspeed a strong pursuing force,
And still succeeds, though Joab, keen of mind,
Leads on with vigour all his troops behind,
Till Abner gains on Ammah's heights a post,
And rallies there the remnant of his host ;
From whence in plaintive mood, but voice aloud,
He calls to Joab, and the gathering crowd :
“What! must the sword for ever rage and wound,
And no cessation to these ills be found ?

Know'st thou not well the fruits that war attend
Are keenly bitter, and in sorrows end?
Then why not stop pursuit and hostile rage,
To cease with brethren mortal war to wage?"
Joab returns: "War ends, I know, in gall,
And sure the bitterest with the house of Saul.
Well hast thou spoke, or through the whole of
night
We should have harass'd 'till the dawn of light."

Here ceased the contest;—when the piercing
sound
Of the shrill trumpet made all halt around.
Joab receded, and with higher hand
Led back in triumph his victorious band,
Who all night travel by the planet's ray,
And welcome Hebron reach at dawn of day,
Where with good tidings they the people greet,
And flush'd with joy, their near connexions meet.
Abner released, forsook his favour'd post,
And back returning led his drooping host.
All night they journey'd, and by morning beam
Pass'd over Jordan's celebrated stream;
Then in the day toil'd o'er the torrid plain,
More peaceful quarters at their homes to gain.

Some men who held Azahel's body dear,
Took it respectful on an honour'd bier,
And in sepulchral vault on Bethlehem's plains
Deposit, mourning, the revered remains,

Where with his father rests each mouldering bone,
Though unrecorded by the sculptured stone.

Awhile these warriors from contention cease,
Suspend their conflicts, and enjoy a peace;
But short the space;—the brand soon fires
again,

Their wrath and wars rekindling taint the plain.
Still conquests mostly unto David fall,
And weaker grows the royal house of Saul.
This roused up Abner with full force to brave
Against success, his sinking cause to save;
When he collects from far a mighty host,
To all o'erwhelm, or let the whole be lost:
But at this juncture jarring discords rose
That turn'd him traitor to his king and cause.

Some steps of Abner's now obtain report,
And notice gain within the royal court.
The king apprized, feels wounded, and in grief,
When thus he questions the offending chief:
“Why hast thou, Abner, to our mutual shame,
Indulged impurely in a lawless flame;
Disgraced thy former king, whose concubine
Unlawfully thou treat'st, as one of thine.”

Too free the language strikes on Abner's ear;
'Tis more than quick and haughty pride can bear;
His fire is raised—his martial ardour burns,
And soon indignant on the charge he turns;

A good pretext, in such a mind, to bring
His influence over unto Judah's king,
For well he knows the tottering house of Saul
Is doom'd, ere long, to Jesse's house to fall ;
And politic in scheme, in measure bold,
He thus attempts the power he held, to hold :
“ What,” says he sternly, “ is this charge I bear ?
Mine honour stained !—It is too much to bear !
Am I a dog ?—held in so mean a light,
When in thy service I am so upright,
Such an adherent unto thee and all
The friends and kindred of thy father Saul ;
Fighting the battles in thy royal cause
Against all Judah, and thy powerful foes,
When oft I could, in my supreme command,
Have turn'd thee over into David's hand.
Is this requital then for such regard ?
And for such deeds is this thy best reward ?
But these good times are past, and thou shalt
know

For whom, in future, I will bend my bow.
No more I will such harsh reproaches bear,
But thou shalt find a sad reverse of war ;
For now the kingdom shall defenceless fall
From thy possession and the heirs of Saul,
And be translated into David's hand,
One far more fit to take the high command ;
And Israel shall, and Judah, by one man,
Henceforth be ruled, from Beersheba to Dan ;

Each sep'rate interest be dissolved in one,
And Jesse's son shall dignify the throne."

This came like thunder to the prince's ear,
For well he knew the cause he had to fear :
His tongue was seal'd, his lips no answer broke,
And Abner left him ere a word he spoke.

To David now revolting Abner sends,
And fealty (link'd with selfish art) pretends ;
A league proposes, and agrees to bring
All Israel over to adopt him king.

David rejoiced of such a change to hear,
And to the offer lent a ready ear ;
Then soon this answer sends by an express :
" The plan I sanction and wish all success,
And to the league am ready to subscribe,
When freely met, and cordial to the tribe ;
But when thou com'st to ratify the deed,
An act of thine must all the rest precede,
And justly this—my consort to restore,
Whom from my hands you as a captive tore,
For she is mine in spite of all the strife ;
A suffering female, and my legal wife.
Then be assured that if not then with thee,
My face with favour thou shalt never see."

This message gone, another follow'd close
To give to Abner energetic force :

To Ishbosheth is sent by ready hand,
This firm, this absolute and stern command :
“ To me my Michal, my just right restore,
Whom now thou hold'st in thy despotic pow'r ;
She who has been the comfort of my life,
A well-earn'd purchase in Philistine strife,
A sweet requital for my deeds in war ;
Return her prompt—nor a refusal dare.”

Thus with all firmness David ventures now
To claim his right, and greater courage show,
When he has Abner so reserved in need
To aid in counsel, and support the deed ;
Whilst his opponent holds a feeble stand
Through the defection of so strong a hand.

The pusillan'mous king now sinks in fear,
While the late threat'nings seem to haunt his ear ;
He trembles at his state, nor dares to try
With threats to dally, or the right deny,
But quick he sends by some coercive hand
To force compliance with the strict command.
To Phalti's house they came to seize his wife,
A darling object, and his balm of life ;
Then hard the task such precious charms to
quit ;
But the king orders—and he must submit.
The wife is seized, and in a mournful strain
The husband follows as they cross the plain.

He weeps—laments—while throbbing beats the
heart,

Nor from the object can he bear to part,
And well it might his tenderest feelings move,
For one so lovely—one who lived in love.
Thus lingering on with clouded looks, awhile,
Where late was seen the animated smile,
At last they reach Bahurim—fresh to smart,
For there fierce Abner sternly bids them part,
Who at the charge, in his unfeeling mood,
Sees the fresh anguish, and the streaming flood ;
But callous grown from war, and scenes of woe,
Vain heaves the sigh, and tears unpitied flow.
As in the field, so here his rigid sway ;—
The husband hears, and hearing must obey.
They part at last—when Phalti back withdraws,
And homeward wanders, brooding o'er his woes.

Abner return'd big with his promised change,
And sets to work, revolving schemes to range :
First to commune with those whose weight he
knows,

If once obtained, will all the rest compose,
The Israelitish elders : these to bring
With all his art he tries, to Judah's king ;
Whom thus he now harangues : “ This truth I
know,

How oft for David you have bent the bow,
How many now expose the honour'd scar,
Gain'd by their prowess in his favour'd war,

For whom you fought with honest zeal, to bring
To grace the throne, and elevate as king ;
Then let not this attachment weakly fall,
Nor prop in vain the tottering house of Saul,
When you must know the Lord above has said,
(And what He dooms will not by man be staid)
That by this favourite He will Israel bless,
Protect the kingdom, and her wrongs redress ;
Will the Philistines in their rage confound,
And gain her homage from the realms around.
In such a cause then let us nobly press,
When peace and plenty shall our borders bless,
Our lofty banners be afar unfurl'd,
And we reign rulers o'er a prostrate world."

By arts so specious, and well plied on all,
He shook the pillars of the house of Saul ;
And thus enlisting Israel in his cause,
He quick to David with good tidings goes ;
With whom full twenty men in martial show,
At his command in ostentation go,
Triumphantly escorting in their train
The rescued female to restore again.
Thus Abner had the grateful task to bring
The captured Michal home, to please his king,
Who then received her freed from all alarms,
A welcome stranger to his open arms,
While she, alike in transport, met her lord,
From tedious exile to the court restored.

Thus introduced in a propitious way,
The chieftain finds that no obstructions lay;
For to this welcome, now he adds the tale
How over all he can with ease prevail,
And by a mutual wish the end obtain
To bring him over both the lands to reign.

David rejoiced thus all at once to find
Things so conspire to gratify his mind;
A lovely wife regain'd, and near the call,
To all the splendours and the power of Saul;
And that the joy may be to all increased,
He treats the party with a royal feast.

The lib'ral table having done its part,
And free libations cheer'd the rising heart,
Thus Abner speaks: "Now let me rise to go,
And my best efforts on the cause bestow,
For they are ripe, and soon thine eyes shall see
All Israel's suffrage will be turned to thee,
O'er whom thou shalt a wide dominion gain,
A chief of chiefs, and king alone to reign."

David approves, and gives with the release
This benediction: "Go—and go in peace."

Short was the peace!—The present hour's
employ
May be all-pleasing, from a flood of joy;

The next, unseen, may all our prospects quash,
And from the lip the cup of pleasure dash ;
Instead of which, brim-full, to overflow,
The next may meet it with the gall of woe.
So proved it here ;—joy soon is turn'd to pain ;
They part in peace—but never meet again !
For the assassin's steel, with murd'rous sway,
Cuts short their triumph ere the close of day !

Soon after Abner left the royal dome
The chieftain Joab reach'd his master's home,
With spoils well loaded, and with pleasing views
On such triumphant deeds, and grateful news ;
When some, too eager tidings to convey,
Relate to him th' occurrence of the day,
In which is given, as foremost to report,
Abner's reception as a friend at court,
Where he the king's full confidence had shared,
And at his table, as companion, fared.

This irritating news roused Joab's flame,
For he disdain'd to hear his very name.
Ungovern'd passions !—he could never bear
To see the king his favours thus confer,
Bestow'd on one, who but the other day
Had stood the foremost to oppose his sway,
As such a rival might, he thought, obtain
Secure ascendance over him to reign ;
A state he could not brook ; the vexing thought
Of degradation on his choler wrought ;

Nor had he yet forgot how Abner stood
Stain'd with his brother young Azahel's blood,
And now this conquest adding to his fame,
Increased assurance and decreased his shame.
Inflamed—he goes his master's ear to gain,
Whom thus he greets in unbecoming strain :
“ What hast thou done !—know'st thou the evil
deed,
And what effects will to thy steps succeed,
In thus receiving with a royal smile
One prone to art, and deeply versed in guile ?
Know'st thou not Abner, that he came to spy,
Thy strength to gather, and thy weakness try ?
Long versed in war, and our determined foe,
By any means he seeks thy overthrow.
Why wilt thou then, from all suspicion clear,
In weakness harbour whom thou ought'st to fear,
Speak peace, and bless the man, who seeks our
wrong,
To whom much rather wrath and death belong ?”

This said ;—in ranc'rous mood he left the place
With death as threatening in his angry face.
He calls a page, to whom in calmer strain
He bids be quick, and scour along the plain,
To call back Abner, and without delay,
As if the king had something more to say.
The faithful page thus charged, each muscle
strain'd,
And, nimble-footed, soon the chieftain gain'd,

Who heard the message, and as on the wing
Of faithful speed, return'd to serve his king.
Arrived at court, and ready to attend
He Joab meets, and greets him as a friend ;
With a frank look and hypocritic smile
It is return'd by this adept in guile,
Who to a private place aside withdraws,
As if to speak on some important cause ;
Instead of which he acts th' assassin's part,
Draws—stabs—and wounds his unsuspecting
heart.

Down Abner falls, with dying looks aghast;
Groans—rack'd in pain, and bleeding, breathes
his last !

O murd'rous act !—was this a soldier's deed,
Who only deems it right in war to bleed,
When arms to arms, and force to force oppose,
By open combat in their country's cause ?
No !—here thy hand a stroke in private gave,
When none suspected, and where none could
save ;

An act that will record thy lasting shame
From age to age, and stigmatize thy name ;
For sure assassins in all lands and times
Stand with the foremost in the list of crimes ;
And near to these the duellist must claim
His rank in sin, and in the shades of shame.

Sad was the news to David's wakeful ear,
And many a sigh it cost, and many a tear :

With deepest grief he heard the shocking tale,
And felt keen anguish over all prevail ;
He tore his robe, in gloom and sackcloth went,
To speak his feelings on the sad event,
And e'en made Joab and his courtiers too
By the same tokens signs of sorrow show ;
But to some comfort David thus could fly :
“ On Joab only all the crime must lie.
For I am clear of such a horrid deed ;
No act of mine has caused the chief to bleed ;
Then may due vengeance fall on Joab's head
In retribution for this worthy dead.”

To parent earth, in Hebron, they resign
The mangled corpse, within its narrow shrine,
Where David at the grave aloud displays
A pungent grief, and thus depicts his praise : }
“ Great Abner died not as some tyrant's tool,
Nor in debasement as some abject fool ;
Nor bled he fighting in the field of war,
An honour'd warrior in his martial car ;
But with unfetter'd feet, and hands unbound,
Unwarded came the dark assassin's wound,
That closed in one sad hour his mortal breath,
And ended all terrestrial bonds in death.
Thus may the wicked the just man betray,
The righteous envy, and their betters slay ;
So treach'ry proud may nearest ties divide ;
So Abner sunk ; and so the hero died.

Then let our feelings oft this day renew,
And to his mem'ry give the tribute due,
In after-times the mournful tale to tell,
Of Joab's action—and how Abner fell."

Such vent to so sorrow thus the monarch gave,
When tears stream'd fresh, and wet the honour'd
grave,
While all the people in their grief of mind,
Were glad in him such ample proof to find,
As from participation clearly freed,
Or any knowledge of th' atrocious deed.

Sepulchral honours paid, with tears thus shed,
The mournful monarch from the scene is led,
The palace enters, where of gen'rous fare
His friends entreat him to partake a share ;
But he protests he will his cravings stay,
Nor touch a morsel till the close of day :
"For why," says he, "should I relinquish grief
When thus entombing a high honour'd chief ?
For know ye not, a man of mighty fame
Is slain in Israel to record our shame ;
One who in valour with the first could vie,
And who deserved a better death to die.
Though now anointed, and in kingly height,
Yet I am weak, and feel a load of weight :
Hard seems the burden I am doom'd to share,
And too oppressive for the mind to bear ;

But God, the judge of all, a friend in need,
Will render justice to each human deed.
Will cause his blessings on the just to flow,
And on the wicked pour his floods of woe ;
Then hush'd be every wish by such controul,
And rest in peace my perturbed soul.”
Such, David, was thy grief in keen degree ;
But was this all that should have come from thee ?
As king and judge, thou shouldst thy station grace,
With equal justice weigh'd in every case.
But was it here ?—should not for this succeed
Far stronger measures on so vile a deed ?
If not to death—yet surely at the time
Severe chastisement should have met the crime.

Thus Abner died ; thus were his ashes laid ;
Thus to his mem'ry were due honours paid,
While Israel round lament their fallen chief
In gen'ral aspect of regret and grief :
And when Saul's son heard of the sudden stroke,
He also mourn'd, and every fear awoke ;
For thus he saw events successive tend
His power to weaken, and his reign to end.
Not long the king remained in this suspense,
Deprived of counsel, and without defence,
For soon, like Abner, he, alas ! is hurl'd
From his high state unto another world.
Thus came his tragic end : within his lands
They had two captains o'er two training bands,

The ruffian Bannah, lawless, void of shame,
And savage Rechab, of no better name,
Who plot together for a horrid deed,
And to the court with hidden arms proceed.
The sun was blazing, and the noon-tide heat
Had made the monarch to his bed retreat,
There in the cool, as wont, in usual peace
To take the comforts of the couch of ease ;
When these assassins in their scheme pretend
To fetch some grain, and up the stairs ascend ;
Instead of which they softly take the room
Where the king lies, unconscious of his doom.
Defenceless victim ! Resolute, they draw
The fatal dagger, and inflict a blow :
Quick to his side the keen-edged weapon flies ;
He bleeds—he sickens—and untimely dies !

Without remorse they sever'd off his head,
Descended calmly, and abruptly fled ;
Then, soon as favour'd by the shades of night,
To Hebron took their undiscover'd flight.
The hour of audience come ; now big they go
To David's house, the trophy-head to show,
With expectation at its utmost height
Of David's welcome of the grateful sight,
And how they shall within the state succeed
To high promotions for so good a deed.
Thus warmly flush'd, they soon the visit paid
The head presented, and elated said :

"See here, my lord, we thy attention call,
This head to welcome of the house of Saul,
Of him who long had disposition shown
To wrest from thee the kingdom and the crown;
But now, behold, the Lord has shown the way
His chief descendant in the dust to lay,
And opposition quell. So may they all
Who still oppose thee in succession fall."

Thus speak th' assassins with a courteous bow;
But David eyes them with a wrinkled brow,
For mix'd and varied, and confusedly brought,
Ideas rush upon his rapid thought:
At last, in tone bespeaking discontent,
And his abhorrence, thus he gave them vent:
"As lives the Lord, who has redeem'd my life
From deep adversity, and war and strife,
I'm bound in justice in his righteous cause
The good to cherish, and the wrong oppose.
And here you deeply err;—I spurn the deed,
And retribution shall the act succeed.
Remember this; that when, some time ago,
A youth brought news of Saul's last overthrow,
With expectation that he should succeed
In sure reward for his ignoble deed,
I deem'd it right, instead of recompense,
With death to punish for the great offence:
Much more do you a striking cause afford
For summar'y justice by the legal sword;

You who so basely in a private way
Have dared the righteous on his bed to slay ;
In his own house, to take the life of one
Direct in lineage to the sacred throne.
Hear then your doom. Thus unprovoked in strife
Blood you have shed ; and life must go for life !”

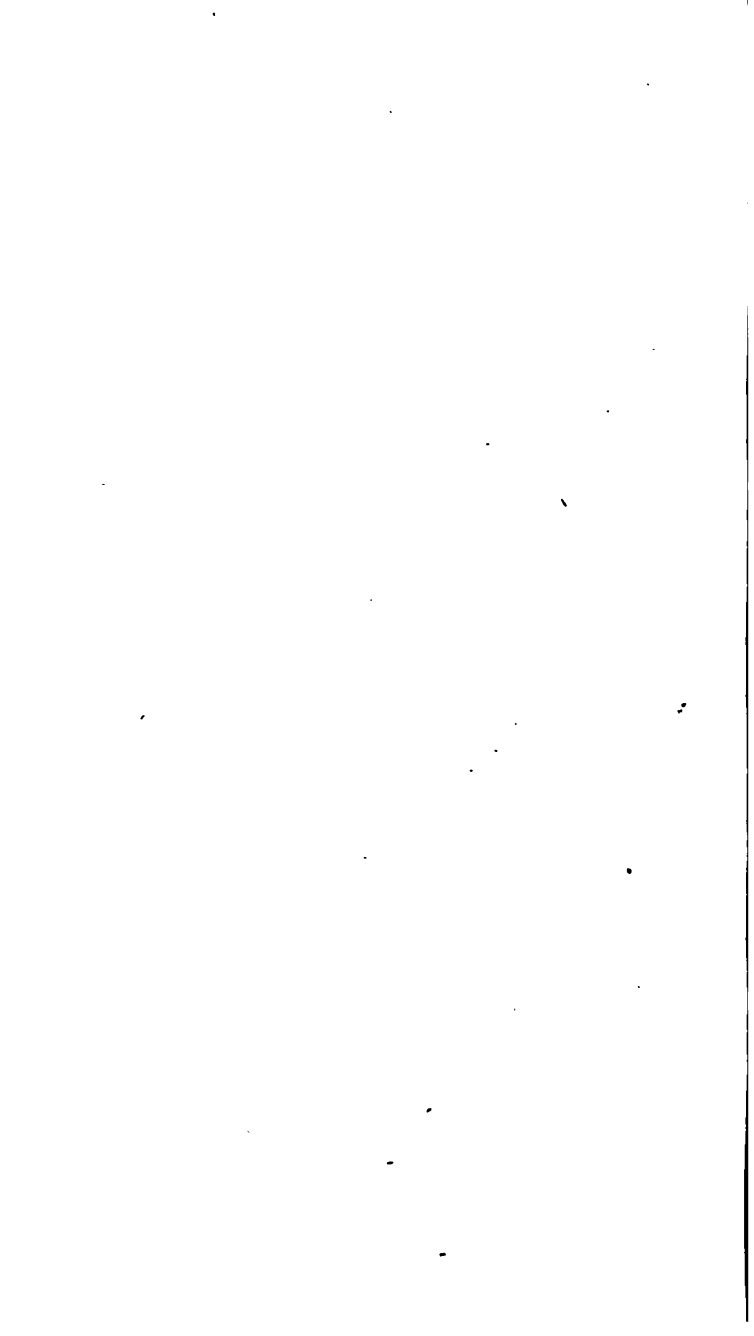
This said ; command was given without delay,
These regicides before the king to slay.
The culprits stood confounded and dismay’d,
Whilst no regard was to their pleadings paid,
For they were soon dispatch’d and distant borne
To hang aloft for gazing crowds to scorn.
Not so the murder’d head of royal line ;
This they respect, to give the hallow’d shrine ;
And in sepulchre with due rites enclose
Where Abner’s ashes in the dust repose.

With David thus such varied scenes had been,
Who only thirty annual suns had seen,
When now again comes on a greater change,
That gives him over all the land to range ;
For, as predicted, to his power now fall,
Without contention, all the rights of Saul.
The sire, the son, and ardent Abner gone,
None seem to stand to claim the vacant throne ;
Hence all the tribes, in one united voice,
On David place their well-directed choice.
Thus harmonized, and now to Hebron drawn
By deputation sent to fix the throne,

The elders there, in their official state,
Thus their commission to the king relate :
“ Bone of thy bone, flesh of thy flesh, are we,
And thus as brethren are we bound to thee,
Who, under Saul, hast often led us far,
And brought us in triumphantly from war ;
Of whom the Lord has said, thou shouldst
succeed,
His people rule, and as a shepherd feed ;
Then as these rights to thee thus appertain,
Accept the crown, and over Israel reign ;
For know 'tis given us in a full command
To place our welfare in thy sovereign hand.”
This friendly message David gladly greets,
Welcomes the elders, and their wishes meets ;
The crown accepts—in solemn league unites
Before the Lord to execute their rights :
They in return engage to firmly stand
In strict allegiance, and at his command.

This done ; the trumpet blows around his fame ;
The oil anoints ; and crowds the King proclaim.
Tis now complete ! in this auspicious hour
David is fixed in undivided power,
And thus at last, to him in freedom fall
The rank and splendours of departed Saul.

END OF BOOK THE SIXTH.



D A V I D.



Book the Seventh.

ARGUMENT.

David, now king over Israel, as well as Judah, goes to take possession of Jerusalem, its capital, but is opposed by the Jebusites.—He obtains it at last by the bravery of Joab.—War again with the Philistines, who want to check his increase of power.—They engage; the Pagans lose the field, and leave their idols.—The Philistines, grieved at the defeat, renew the war.—They engage again, and again another defeat follows.—David now in peace proposes to fetch the ark to the city.—Three thousand people assemble on the occasion.—They fetch it, but on the way Uzzah is smitten for touching it.—After a time they renew the attempt with greater caution.—They succeed, and enter the city with general joy, but Michal ridicules her husband for his conduct in it.—David proposes to Nathan to build the temple, but it is set aside by a night vision to the prophet.—Another successful battle with the Philistines, in which he takes their capital city, Gath, and they become subject to him.—David goes to the borders of the Euphrates to recover some rights, and in the excursion has engagements with several opposing powers, but is successful in all.—King Toi sends his son to congratulate him on his achievements.—Being returned home, he enquires after Jonathan's descendants, and finds Mephibosheth, his son, whom he takes to provide for.—The King of Ammon dies.

DAVID.

Book the Seventh.

Thus David rose by easy steps to gain
The double crown, and o'er the tribes to reign,
On which Jerusalem, (the chiefest place,
Where kings held courts, where dwelt the royal
race,)

Gains his attention for a fixed abode,
The palace claiming as its rightful lord.
Then to the city with a loyal band
He pass'd in kingly state and high command ;
But at her gates the Jebusites declared
They would oppose, and stood for war prepared ;
When loud and fierce, from the surrounding wall
Thus in derision to the king they call :
" Behold our strength of walls, and warriors here ;
Retire ;—or learn who 'tis thou ought'st to fear.

Except thou tak'st away the lame and blind,
Thou shalt no entrance in our city find ;
For with contenders we can here contend,
And will the town against all force defend."

This disappointment raised the monarch's ire,
And such a vaunt increased his martial fire ;
When thus he threats : " These daring men must
know

Who 'tis they challenge to become their foe.
Know then, ye soldiers, whom no walls can bar,
My fellow-comrades in the field of war,
Who shall ascend above the gutter's height,
And others lead to put this horde to flight,
These lame, these blind, this Jebusitish band,
I will promote to hold the first command."

This offer tempted Joab, who, in pride
To gain this honour, all his vigour tried :
He tried—succeeded—gain'd the towering
height,

Led on the men, and kill'd, or put to flight;
Before his arms the vaunters trembling fly,
Or fighting fall, and in confusion die.
Decisive work ! Thus David soon obtains
The royal city to his vast domains,
For Zion's bulwarks, though so vast and tall,
Could not withstand when they were doom'd to
fall.

So beaten vessels sometimes firmly ride,
And gain the port in spite of wind and tide.

These now possess'd, the fort his home became,
And from his own he institutes its name,
Call'd "David's City"—which he circles round
With piles of buildings over spacious ground,
Which on a rock of firm foundation stand,
That tower in prospect o'er surrounding land ;
And to complete the whole, the king of Tyre
Sends of his best, without a fee or hire,
Vast stores of timber, cedar trees, that stood
The growth of ages in his spacious wood ;
With his chief workmen, versed in every part
Of architecture, and mechanic art.
These numerous hands, whom one in chief surveys,
A noble mansion for the monarch raise,
Where towering domes in convex order rise,
The polished marble with the gilding vies,
And Tuscan work with Doric art unite,
To please the taste, and give the eye delight.
The Lord of Hosts now favour'd every deed,
And David saw his wish in all succeed,
E'en children added to complete his store,
That nothing lack'd to make him crave for more.
Thus crown'd with favours, he beholds the whole
With holy transports and a grateful soul,
Discerning here a high and heavenly Hand,
That can the rise and fall of kings command,

At work therein, his Israel to bless,
And make the world the Lord of all confess.

Consummate state ! where all at once combine
To gratify each wish and great design :
Hence sure, he thinks, his times of grief are
past,
And all the tempests now have blown their last.
Delusive hope !—for while on earth below,
Man with his sweets must some admixture know,
A little gall mix'd as a kind alloy
To damp the ardour of excessive joy ;
To make him feel that this is not his home ;
His settled rest—his paradise to come.
And so thou found it, David, oft to know
Thy pleasing moments near allied to woe ;
And well for thee, and many more, to feel
Such checks to pleasures and the wayward will.
These oft were made the means, in after day
To keep thy footsteps in the better way,
To flag thy flight, when cheering suns had shone,
And all things flatter'd on a prosp'rous throne,
Where oft thy mind was haply led to see
How small the worth of mundane things could be ;
How low, how transient all their charms could
prove
When set in contrast with the things above ;
With those that lead to scenes not yet unfur'd,
Of endless glories in a better world.

Ere long thus settled, fear and envy rose
To swell the breasts of Israel's bitter foes,
The proud Philistines now, with deep dismay,
Saw David rise to power, and kingly sway,
And could not in their haughty tempers bear
His elevation to so high a sphere,
Foreboding evils, in a shrewd surmise,
If thus permitted over all to rise,
For when far weaker they had felt his arm,
And strength'ning thus, it roused their just alarm.
Hence now they muster'd all their martial might,
To timely pull him from his dreaded height,
Ere he his strength matured, and vengeance hurl'd,
To level at his feet a trembling world.
Rouse not the lion from his peaceful bed,
Nor near his den with daring menace tread,
Lest, risen to rage, he shake his fiery mane,
Nor glut his fury but by numbers slain.
No!—rash to war, offensive war they wage,
And rouse the monarch to inflict his rage;
When in th' event, that power they would subdue,
Becomes their ruin when too late to rue.

The clarions sound alarm, both far and near;
The vet'ran thousands in the field appear,
Who ready stand, fierce, and with daring
 beast,
A far extended and a powerful host.

David thus challenged, now must face the strife,
And leave the comforts of domestic life,
To meet in combat—and perhaps to fall,
When he must bid adieu to life and all ;
All earthly blessings that his mind employ,
All sweets in prospect, and his present joy ;
All that so lately seem'd so firm in hand,
With pleasing views to permanently stand ;
In one short hour exchange them, to become
Transfix'd at once to an eternal doom,
And verify the fragile hold of things,
Unstable even in the hands of kings.
Yet so it proved not ; for a hand o'er all
Shielded the vet'ran from the threaten'd fall,
And still preserved from death, or what could bar
His future service both in peace and war.

The gallant chief was strong in troops and arms,
In men, he knows, whom zealous ardour warms ;
Yet as the race to swiftness is not sure,
Nor yet the battle to the arm of power,
He dare not rest upon the sword or shield,
But asks advice before he takes the field,
And humbly thus : “ May I, O Lord ! engage
With this vast army, and Philistine rage ?
And if I go, and put my trust in Thee,
Wilt thou the victory to our cause decree ? ”
A gracious answer was return'd again,
Which left no room for doubts, or anxious pain :

"Go up," was said, "in faith and courage
stand,
And I will give them to thy conquering hand."

Encouraged thus, the king no more abstains
To meet those legions on the tented plains,
But when next morning blush'd with early red,
And o'er their camps its rich effulgence spread,
The ardent hero rose to war's alarms ;
All buckled on, and glitter'd in their arms,
Ranged in their ranks, each at his proper stand,
Warm for the conflict at their chief's command.

They meet severe : but soon the pagan host
Gives way ; and flies, with hope and honour
lost,

To see, if they could see, at every fall
That Israel's helper is a God o'er all,
And that attempts ascendancy to gain
Are all but efforts ever made in vain,
Without one prospect of their wish'd success,
And only tend to make their armies less,
To see their bravest fall, or turn the shield,
Stung with disgrace from a defeated field.

In their confusion and their grief of mind,
They left their idols in the wreck behind,
Which now the victors burnt ; but other spoil
They took in heaps to recompense their toil.

Thus for their rashness the Philistines smart,
When David leaves them with a grateful heart,
And thanks his God, who, as he fitly said,
“Had thus the mighty at his mercy laid ;
Made their great force recede, and ranks divide,
As broken waters, or the ebbing tide.”

This conquest gain'd, he witness'd some repose ;
But short he held it from his neighbouring foes,
For these fierce heathens, still hood-wink'd and
blind,
In idols trusting, and of ranc'rous mind,
Could not in patience brook this overthrow,
But vow'd their vengeance in another blow,
By their recruited strength again to try
In desperate conflict to succeed or die.
Then all their troops they quick collected round,
And pitch'd again upon the former ground,
That on the very spot of loss before
They might their honour and their spoil restore ;
For now so vast a power they could display
As made them count on a victorious day ;
Hence flowing banners now they high unfurl'd,
And bade defiance to the hostile world.

David prepares, but ere he meets their ire,
He must again for best advice inquire ;
Not from frail man, of dim contracted sight,
To whom the future is involved in night,

But from that Being who can all befriend,
Arrange his purpose, and assure the end.
This done in humble supplicating mood,
To go or stay he all-submissive stood,
His will subdued not e'en one step to tread,
Except the counsels of this wisdom led.
Thrice happy man ! who, by recourse to heaven,
Could have instruction for thy guidance given,
For'under this in confidence made sure
Of best protection in the needful hour,
Thou brav'dst all perils, both at home and far,
Amidst the thunders and the wreck of war.

The needful answer came, and gave command,
Not then to face the overwhelming band,
But take a round behind some ranging trees,
And there to wait a gentle moving breeze,
Which heard to sound among the boughs above,
He was to deem a certain sign to move ;
For at this time the Lord of Hosts would fright
With a dread panic, and decide the fight.
In due compliance David ranged his host,
His orders gave, and took his proper post.
They move ;—they wait ;—ere long the sound
they hear,
The favour'd signal of successes near.
Fierce as the tiger, all their efforts try ;
The swords rage dreadful, and the arrows fly ;
But soon the influence of an aid Divine
Breaks all the order of the pagan line,

Unnerves their strength, gives vigour to their foes,
And soon decides the great depending cause !
Pursued with slaughter in abrupt retreat,
The battle ended in a full defeat,
Which now completely spread the horror far;
That cool'd their courage for the rage of war,
And hence it made them deem attempts in vain
To try in battle what they'd lost to gain,
For they could not conceive their land would
yield

A greater force than now had fill'd the field ;
And seeing too, at last, some secret cause
Brought blasts upon them, while it blest their
foes.

As in the seas projects a flinty rock
Proof to the tempest's unavailing shock,
Proof to the tumults of the restless tides,
And boistrous winds that bluster round its sides,
It firmly stands, and still all fury braves
In proud ascendance o'er surrounding waves :
Thus David stood ;—all opposition vain
His power to lessen, or resist his reign.

Then knew'st thou, David, how this should
impart
Cause for returns of gratitude of heart ?
How these high favours, granted but to few,
Should bow thy spirit, and thy thanks renew ?
Yes ; well thou didst this grateful mind display,
In psalms and hymns, and many a sacred lay,

Which, as if graven on the holy page,
Record thy fervours to the present age,
And breathe a language able to inspire
The languid breast with animating fire.

His enemies thus quell'd, things better far
Succeed the horrors of destructive war,
For civil acts, and those of sacred kind,
Engage th' attention of his active mind ;
A mind that something always must employ,
Prolific spring—a fount of grief and joy !

O happy change ! had this commenced a peace
When war for ever had been made to cease,
And raised abhorrence in th' enlighten'd mind
Against all slaughters of the human kind.
Well might such change have graced the sacred
page,
Hail'd down to us with joy through every age,
A radical reform of powerful sway,
To root the cause, and hence effects away ;
That baneful rancour, which too often springs
From feuds of parties, and the pride of kings.
But sad reverse !—that peace but shortly stood,
For evils soon rolled on a grievous flood, "
Which sanguine deeds renew'd, and once again
War raised its head, o'er erring man to reign,
Prevailing since to stain th' historic page
In every kingdom, and in every age.

No class exempt ; all suffer, act, or see,
The Jew, the Christian—savage—bond or free,
For all have known, with horror and dismay,
Its murd'rous rage, and desolating sway.

But why, if in the time of outward law
The Jewish and the Gentile blood should flow,
Should it descend the gospel times to stain,
And in these times of light a sanction gain,
When our great Leader, and our guiding Star,
Has taught us in this world a better war,
A bloodless war, our passions to repress,
To love who hate us, and our foes to bless ;
That in the Christian mind no will should move
But what accords with philanthropic love.
Let this prevail—the grand, the gospel rule,
And well-taught lesson in Christ's sacred school,
And in that breast no rancour then can breed,
The warring passions in their rage to feed ;
Hence they would never swell to raise a strife,
To prompt a wish against another's life ;
Much less to raise a hand a death to bear,
And send a soul at once we know not where.

The Christian's heart pants for this day of peace,
When sanguine discord shall for ever cease ;
When the prediction time shall realize
That nation shall no more on nation rise,
And man no more shall spread destruction far,
Nor learn the tacticks of infernal war ;

But swords transform'd to plough-shares shall
appear,
And to the pruning hook the deadly spear,
When righteousness may flow, to never cease,
As waters cover the expanded seas,
And that all nations, kindreds, tongues, may prove
Messiah's reign in universal love!

From this digression, which may well engage
In heart-felt interest ev'ry rank and age,
We turn again, with pleasure to pursue
The peaceful prospects David had in view.
Thus well-disposed he sends a summons round
To all his chiefs, for virtues most renown'd ;
The leaders of the land, who, firm in zeal,
Stood ever steadfast to their country's weal.

They met—composed of many a deep-versed
sage

In manly vigour ; and of hoary age ;
Who now before the king arranged appear,
With fix'd attention his commands to hear.
He rose august from his exalted place,
While awful thought was pictured in his face,
When thus he tries to zealously impart
The glowing ardour of his anxious heart :
“ My many worthies, who thus prompt appear,
I gladly greet in full convention here,
And with a grateful heart the scene behold
That to such audience I my views unfold.

To your remembrance then I foremost call
Our grievous errors in the days of Saul,
When no attention to the ark was given,
To the dishonour of the God of heaven,
And our great loss, unwisely to prevent
The best of blessings unto mortals sent.
Then hear, ye guardian chiefs, what I propose
For your accordance in the sacred cause.
Let us now send through all the realm around,
To faithful brethren for their zeal renown'd,
With priests and levites, in their ranks to come,
To fetch the ark, and rest it here at home ;
This precious gift by thousands to restore
To all th' importance it possess'd before,
That with due honours it may nobly stand
To grace our city, and to bless the land."

The congregation then rejoiced to find
Such pious projects in the monarch's mind,
And as one voice approve the holy deed ;
Quickly decide—and in the work proceed.
Around they send with this request to greet,
When thirty thousand for the purpose meet.

The king, well-pleased, and as their active
head

To Gibeah's plains the peaceful numbers led,
Not clad in armour, nor with direful arms
To carry fury, and diffuse alarms,

But warm in zeal the long-lost ark to bring,
Their God to honour, and to serve their king.

Come to the place, and with a cart new made,
On which to taint it never burden laid,
The ark at once they readily prepare,
And fix it on with an assiduous care.

The grand procession now moves on its way ;
The oxen firm, their drivers prompt obey.
Two men appointed take the chief command,
And drive with cautious step, and steady hand.
At funeral pace they move through gazing crowds,
Beneath a torrid sun and dusty clouds,
While sacred music, with melodious sound,
And trem'lous echo, casts an awe around.

In order thus they pass'd, when unforeseen
A sad disaster closed the solemn scene.
The oxen stumbled, and the tilt was near
To cast the ark. This raised a sudden fear ;
When Uzzah, zealous in his high command,
Stretch'd forth, to succour, his supporting hand ;
But ah, too rash !—just as he touch'd the side,
He felt a stroke, then back recoil'd, and died !

Amazement all !—quick consternation ran,
Like an electric shock, from man to man :
The king stood all aghast, for now he thought
Divine displeasure this affliction brought,

By which he might the sov'reign will unfold,
"That they should not the sacred treasure hold;"
For then was unreveal'd the secret cause
From whence this judgment on their deeds arose.
Concluding thus, he durst no further go,
Lest his presumption bring another woe;
Then back again the sacred trust they bear,
To Obed-edom's house, and special care.

But David here mistook the hidden hand
That brought their movements to this signal stand:
It was not to forbid, but strike with awe,
For such an act against a sacred law,
Against the charge that none without command
Should touch such holies with unhallow'd hand;
And thus at once in more than words to say,
"That God should rule in all, and man obey."

The ark replaced, the multitude divide,
And disappointed, scatter far and wide,
Each to his home, with countenance of gloom,
And thoughts that ponder'd on their future doom.
With down-cast look to court the monarch goes,
And bears the pressure of unfathom'd woes,
For with the first he stands in pungent grief,
As the first mover, and in all the chief.

Some time thus past with undiscover'd cause,
From whence the check on their proceedings
rose;

At last some welcome cheering light they gain,
To soothe their fears, and dissipate their pain;
For where the ark was placed they knew no harm,
Nor any reason to excite alarm;
But in reverse, they to their comfort found
Their house was blest, and blessings flow'd around,
Where, as spontaneous, riches took th' increase,
And all the favours were enjoy'd in peace.

By this encouraged, David now renews
The prosecution of his former views;
And having found that from neglect arose
Their late disaster in so good a cause,
He now proceeds with strict attentive care
To errors shun, and all aright prepare.
To hold the ark a handsome tent is made
On which no cost or ornament is spared;
When tens of thousands gather from around,
And, harmonizing, occupy the ground;
Priests, levites, singers, all in right array,
Before the view a lively sight display,
With instruments of music, such a store
As never graced a holy rank before.

Collected thus, the king survey'd the band,
Rejoiced to see the ardour of the land,
And throwing round his eyes with look benign,
That spoke his interest in the great design,
He thus in caution (with firm voice express)
The wide assembly, ere they moved, address:

“ With pleasure I behold this happy day,
So vast a number fervent zeal display,
As thus assembling from all parts proceed
To be assistant in so good a deed :
But ere we move, let me the past review,
And give a caution, which to all is due,
Lest any one through ignorance should swerve,
And make our deeds another blast deserve.
Then be it known, and every ear be told,
No cart should ever such a treasure hold.
The ark is holy ; and no common thing
Should be employ'd so great a charge to bring,
For indecorous, in so slight a way,
The heathen tribes their idol-gods convey.
Here then we err'd, for 'tis decreed we must
With more respect discharge the sacred trust ;
Nor ox, nor ass, in such a cause employ,
To ease our labour, but the work annoy ;
For levites only must the burden bear,
With rites performed, and all-devoted care,
While strictest watch the weighty charge demands
No touch to suffer with unhallow'd hands.

“ Then hear, ye sons of Aaron, priests and chiefs,
Be guarded now, and ward repeated griefs,
For most important cares devolve on you,
And you as guardians will the people view :
Then sanctify yourselves, and all prepare
To take the charge, the holy ark to bear,

And all the music to your wills arrange,
Each rank to fix, and varying sounds to change;
That tongues of joy and instruments may raise
Thanks for the gift, in unity of praise ;
And our vast host in order may proceed
With holy rev'rence to so great a deed."

Thus sanctified, and all aright array'd,
Command was giv'n, and all to move obey'd.

Arrived at last where this great gift abode,
(This awful token of their mighty God,)
The Levites now, in reverential fear,
Take up the ark and on their shoulders bear,
While solemn music and the shouts of joy,
The king, and people of all ranks employ.

Ere far they moved, forth issued a command ;
They halt obedient, and like statues stand ;
Then order'd quick, to sacrifice proceed :
Seven rams, seven bullocks on the altar bleed ;
And thus observant, they true honours pay,
That no neglect may blast their future way.

This solemn rite and first oblation made
With all due forms, and every homage paid,
The grand procession then moved on its way
Amidst the music that resumed its play,
Where joyful David, foremost in advance,
Join'd in the chorus, and the nimble dance,

Robed in fine linen, Levite-like, alert,
And with an ephod round his body girt.
The city now receives the host with joy,
Whilst gazing crowds and narrow streets amoy ;
Queen Michal one, who from a window's height
Survey'd o'er all the animating sight ;
But when her eyes beheld her active lord
Dance on before, and bursts of joy afford,
She scorn'd his conduct in the heat of pride,
With breast inflated, and a tongue to chide.

The court thus gained, the ark was safely
placed
Within the curtains, and its station graced,
Whilst hope was raised that it would ever stand
To draw down blessings on their favour'd land.
Still further honours David duly paid,
By sacrifices and burnt offerings made,
When smoke, and thanks, and praise united rise
As grateful incense for the sacred prize.

These rites perform'd in order, David rose
To bless the people in so good a cause,
And then with liberal hand not used to spare,
He deals his gifts to all the thousands there ;
To each, of wine, a flagon full and fresh,
And due proportion of the store of flesh,
With loaves of bread, in equal numbers shared,
In which the females with their brethren fared.

All done ;—the well pleased multitude depart,
Each with the present, and a grateful heart,
Dividing homeward on their cheerful way,
To carry tidings of that signal day.

The crowds dispersed, some of the Levite race
Attend the ark ;—each to his proper place,
By David's orders henceforth to reside,
To keep the records, and for all provide,
To see with morning and with evening sun
The rites and offerings in their system done ;
That choirs of music in their order play
Both at the opening and the close of day ;
And unremitting care maintain'd through all
For which the hallow'd place and treasure call.
To Asaph's hand he gives (to whom belong
The cares of music and the sacred song)
A well composed and well-adapted psalm,
On past events to animate and warm,
For him, united with his choirs, to raise
Melodious anthems, and the chant of praise.

Now David homeward turns, there to impart
These deeds, recited from a grateful heart,
Where all his household may excite his care,
And from his lips a solemn blessing share.
But sad reverse of welcome ! hard to find,
Instead of unity, a taunting mind !
And this from one whom sympathy should move,
Who gain'd his ardent and his early love,

And many years had proved the faithful wife,
To soothe and comfort through the toils of life.
This gender'd griefs that on his bosom lay,
And veil'd in clouds the lustre of the day.

With fervent heart the king his palace gain'd,
And soon with Michal interview obtain'd.
She frown'd ;—her colour flush'd ere silence broke,
Then thus in warmth and irony she spoke :
“ How glorious was this day great Israel's king!
How did he dance, and loud in chorus sing,
With change of dress, scarce decent to the eye,
Like some rude fellow who would mirth supply,
Where thou couldst only what was due obtain,
The handmaids' blushes, and a just disdain.”

David confounded, disappointed, stood ;
A moment's pause ensued, in pensive mood ;
Yet not for long an answer he delays,
For soon he thus her ridicule repays :
“ Know'st thou not then what consequence has
 been
Attach'd to us in this important scene ;
Whose cause it is ;—and in this great display
Whom 'tis we serve, and duty-bound obey ?
'Tis the great Lord of Hosts, whose judgment
 brings
The wreck of empires, and the fall of kings ;
Who has decreed thy father's house to fall,
And thus advance me to the seat of Saul,

That in his cause I might devoted stand
To judge uprightly o'er a suffering land.
Yes, much I owe, and much I will repay ;
I will abhor myself, and meaner lay ;
For more I see of Him, the more I know
The lower I should be and deeper bow ;
Yes, more and more I will myself despise,
And show what man is to the people's eyes ;
Yet this no sting shall leave, nor moral stain,
But from the handmaids approbation gain."

The force she seem'd to feel of what was said,
More cool became, and no rejoinder made ;
But felt not then her lasting poignant doom,
This was reserved in future days to come ;
For afterwards she was condemn'd through life
To bear the chagrin of a fruitless wife.
Here altercation closed ; the tongue was stay'd,
And discord seem'd between the parties laid ;
Yet still disturb'd, they felt no settled peace :
So seas still murmur though the tempests cease.

The sable curtains of the night now drew,
And wearied thousands bade the world adieu ;
In sweet repose upon the couch to lay
To drown the labours of the busy day.
Not so the king :—joy springs—and then a sigh,
That banish slumbers from his wakeful eye,
And let him know, with certain proof again,
How near our pleasures are allied to pain:

A time of respite now to David rose :
His friendship courted—and at rest his foes ;
His palace finish'd—and the ark obtain'd ;
It seem'd as if his every wish was gain'd.
He felt it so ; and gratefully awhile
Beheld these blessings all around to smile :
But changeful state ! how oft with him it turns ;
This moment joyous—but the next he mourns !

In this repose, and this composed state,
The prophet Nathan once with David sat,
So wont to pass their time, and views impart
As kindred spirits, and as one of heart ;
When David gives this hint in honest zeal,
A fav'rite project gently to reveal :
“ And seest thou not,” says he, “ my regal state
Beneath these cedar'd domes, where honours wait,
While veil'd with curtains, the best gift of God,
The ark is portion'd to a worse abode.”

The prophet caught the view, and with an ear
So quick to things where pious thoughts appear,
It made him err.—“ Yes, so it is,” says he ;
“ Go then to work on what presents to thee,
For God is with thee to assist in need,
And bless thy efforts in so good a deed.”

Thus all pass'd well until the midst of night,
When round the prophet shone a glow of light,

And from the radiance clearly was express'd
A well-known language which the seer address'd,
And gave command for him again to go
To David's house, and what was right to show :
For he had erred ;—must there retract his word,
And bear a mission, issued from his Lord ;
In which he should to David's memory bring
How he advanced, and how became a king ;
That by the Lord's free choice, and powerful
hand,

He from the sheepcot came to rule the land,
Whose sovereign arm had been outstretch'd in all,
To make before him kings and kingdoms fall,
And thus to place him where e'en Saul had sat,
In regal splendour, and imperial state.

That for such favours, which he might review,
A heart replete with gratitude was due ;

And in continued zeal his right to prove

In every act, his unabated love ;

But here to stop—his duty here to know ;

No further step, without a grant, to go ;

For it was not intended in these days

To give command the temple now to raise,

But to suspend it for a future hand,

Who should more leisure and more peace command :

For David had in warring station stood,

And oft imbued his hands in human blood ;

Hence from that cause the work was now denied,

Transferr'd from him, and yet his place supplied.

For it should still be raised, and in his life,
With all the splendour of the great design,
In which the Lord (when David should be gone,
And with his fathers sleep) would aid the son,
That to his honour he might nobly raise
A work to stand a monument of praise.

The morning blush'd, when with the crimson
red

The prophet rose and left a wakeful bed,
Waiting intent till circling hours should bring
The time of audience to address the king.
It came ;—he went ;—he gained the royal ear,
And was concern'd a faithful charge to bear,
In closest truth of language to recite
The gracious vision witness'd in the night.
Convey'd with gravity ; it struck an awe,
And made the monarch to the mandate bow ;
For though reluctance he might feel in part
Thus to surrender what was near his heart,
Yet, knowing that to human minds belong
Proneness to error, and of judging wrong,
And that this came from one most just and true,
To whom were faith and all obedience due,
His will, though warm, he to his Lord resign'd,
With pliant heart, and dedicated mind.

Nathan now gone—'twas David's early care
To turn his footsteps to the house of prayer,

Where with due reverence, and in fear express'd,
 In vocal strain he thus his God address'd :
 "Accept, O gracious Lord ! on bended knee
 And soul prostration, gratitude from me,
 In thanks for favours long conferr'd on one,
 Raised from the sheepcot to a sacred throne.

"I often err ;—and e'en in zeal I stray,
 But Thou in kindness show'st the better way ;
 Then teach me, Lord, in thy correction still,
 To bend submissive to thy sovereign will;
 For it is not in man, so dim of sight,
 His steps to order, and direct aright.

"What, Lord, am I, and what my house, to
 share
 Such signal favours, and paternal care ?
 Not only past, but still in promise, some
 Thou hast in store for seasons yet to come.
 All thanks be mine ; and suffer me to pray
 For our dear Israel in the present day,
 That favour'd people, whom thy mighty hand
 Wrench'd from their thralldom in th' Egyptian land,
 Made in the sea a path for them to tread,
 Then closed the flood, and left their tyrants dead.
 By fire thou ledd'st them on their nightly way,
 And by a cloud to be their guide by day;
 Whilst with almighty pow'r Thou brought'st
 them far
 Through lonely deserts, and through fields of war,

Transferring them from realms where pagans reign,
Bow down to idols, and divine for gain,
A land to people from all bondage free,
To worship Thee, their God, and only Thee.
Then may we in this purity be found,
A bright example to the world around,
That idols may be moulder'd into dust,
And pagans learn in Thee alone to trust.
May then thy blessings, and thy fostering hand,
Be granted still to thy peculiar land,
And all thy people in return proclaim
Glory and honour to thy sacred name ;
To Thee who dwell'st in unapproached light,
A God of wisdom, majesty, and might."

Thus humbly he in deep prostration bow'd,
Whilst in his face angelic fervour glow'd.
He rose—and then his active mind address'd
To temporal things, but still with awe impress'd.

The milder duties now in measure cease,
And David must again relinquish peace,
Exchange the comforts of domestic life,
To meet the rage of infidels in strife ;
For the Philistines rise once more to war,
Dash to the field in many a sounding car,
Renew their vigour, and their prowess try ;
But soon defeated, drop their flags and fly,
Leaving their city, Gath, thus overcome,
To servile bondage as its future doom,

With all the rest at large, subordinate
Subjects and vassals to this foreign state.

Now Moab also rose a war to wage ;
But of short durance was their blustering rage.
Invulnerable still, the Jews could bar
Their mighty engines, and their arts of war ;
Which ere 'twas long they felt, and made a stand
To cede to Israel their devoted land,
Who suppliant now at David's mercy lay,
And dearly for their chief's contumely pay ;
Glad too their presents and rich gifts to bring,
To soften rigour in their captor king.

Thus Moab conquer'd, David changed his post,
And moved still further his victorious host,
His march commencing with the morning beam
To where Euphrates rolls its mighty stream,
There to recover a dismember'd right,
By peaceful treaty—or if not, by might ;
But Hadarezer, a too hasty king,
Must bar the claim, and force opposing bring ;
Yet he no better fares, for now they are
Still greater sufferers in the foils of war.
From this quell'd king, a victory supplies
A thousand chariots as a legal prize ;
With cavalry unknown of man and horse,
Of infantry a twenty thousand force :
And in addition, an enriching mass
Of precious metals, silver, copper, brass,

And golden shields emboss'd with precious stone,
Where harness'd work and native lustre shone.
Nor ends it here ; for when the Syrians saw
The king of Zobah meet his overthrow,
They raised assistance to revenge again,
And from Damascus pour'd upon the plain,
In hopes such force would animate anew,
Aid their allies, and all their foes subdue.
But vain attempt ! this great auxiliar host,
Renew'd the conflict—but the battle lost !
Of whom e'en more than twenty thousand slain
Lay sacrificed upon th' ensanguined plain.
Such now their loss in this conflicting hour
It cool'd their spirits, and subdued their power,
Made them obsequious in submission bend,
And all their efforts in their bondage end.

All these opposing hosts thus overcome,
They back receded to enjoy their home ;
But on return another power in force
Starts up to check them in their peaceful course.
These in a valley, conscious of his might,
Take all advantage to arrange to fight ;
But cannot see th' apparent fact, so plain
That all their strivings are but made in vain,
That an Almighty is at work o'er all,
Spurns at their idol-gods, and dooms their fall.

These Edomites were then condemn'd to feel
The Hebrews' fury, and decisive steel ;

For eighteen thousand of their daring host
Sunk in their armour—were for ever lost ;
Whose limbs no funeral bier respectful bore,
But the keen talons of the vulture tore,
And left them scatter'd rudely to the sky,
Relics of horror to appall the eye.

Thus through all toils and dangers free from
harm

The king was held by an Almighty arm,
Who blest his efforts in all times of need,
And made to prosper every act and deed,
For the great cause was his, in such employ,
To root out pagans and their gods destroy,
And class a people under his command,
Of pure devotion to possess the land.

Now all supprest of this idol'trous race,
Each fort was strengthened, and each needful
place,
Securing peace, and a supreme command
In future times o'er this aggressive land.
These done—the active king, without delay,
Moved on his ranks, and homeward bent his way ;
Then to Jerusalem with welcome brings
The spoil of empires, and the wreck of kings ;
For treasures, which our numbers cannot tell,
Into his hands in all these conquests fell,
Rich studded shields of gold, refulgent made ;
High-polish'd armour ; swords of glittering blade ;

With ivory, pearls, and massy loads of brass,
Which now on camels to the city pass,
There to be laid, a trophy-swelling store,
With spoils and treasures often won before,
Reserved for use in some succeeding days
When artists may a sacred temple raise.

Now David great celebrity obtains,
And, fear'd and loved, in peace and plenty reigns ;
Renown'd afar, his friendly terms are sought,
And many tokens from around are brought :
Amongst the rest king Toi's son is sent
Congratulating on this great event,
Great to his sire, for Hadarezer most
His land had harass'd with his restless host,
And now he hoped that such an overthrow
Would peace enforce in this malicious foe.

Thus came this prince from his pacific land,
With costly presents in his liberal hand,
Rich shining vessels, which at large unfold
The works of art in silver, brass, and gold.
These, with his father's thanks, he has to bear
For great achievements in the recent war ;
And peace to wish, with blessings on his ways
In all his movements in succeeding days.

The son is well received, and from his hand
The splendid tokens from his grateful land,

And David glad to add a portion more
For sacred purpose to his former store.

Joram returns—before his sire appears
With news confirm'd to dissipate his fears,
Who in composure and with joy surveys
More pleasing prospects for their future days.

David now blest with peace, his active mind
For worthy objects ranged around to find.
Wide was the field in which his station stood ;
Ample his means, and great his deeds of good.
As magistrate in chief, he now began
In civil life to act the useful man,
'To all complaints an open ear to lend ;
Th' oppressor punish, and the just defend.
A blest employment, and excelling far
The bubble-glories of the fame of war.

Amongst such objects, those he tries to find
To whom he owes a gratitude of mind ;
And first of these that to his notice fall,
Are the descendants of the house of Saul,
Where Jonathan stands first his thoughts to claim,
His friend—his brother—and of precious name.
Inquiring now, he information gains
That of his stock a single one remains ;
Mephibosheth, a well-deserving son,
But who with trials young in life begun,

For his weak nurse, affrighted at th' alarms
When Saul was slaughter'd, dropp'd him from
her arms ;

And by the fall his tender feet became
From that event, and 'till this period, lame.
Appriz'd of this, the king an order sends ;—
The prince is brought, and at the court attends.
Approaching David with obeisance low,
The ground he touches as he makes his bow ;
When thus the king, all-anxious to be kind,
Reveals what dwells on his magnan'mous mind :
“ Fear not, my friend, for I intend to make
Thy life a comfort for thy father's sake ;
To thee restore some of the royal land,
And thou shalt always in my presence stand,
Sleep in my palace, at my table fare,
And thou and thine have my peculiar care.”

This said, Mephibosheth confounded stood,
But thus at last spoke in a faltering mood :
“ Great is thy goodness thus vouchsafed to me ;
But what, my lord, canst thou deserving see,
Sec in thy servant, so unfit to stand,
Before the sovereign of so great a land ?”

The king's attendants now have charge to call
Ziba, late servant, and attach'd, to Saul,
Who in all haste before his lord appears,
And from his mouth this bounteous order hears :

"Ziba, I call thee to a place of trust,
And as I charge thee to the charge be just.
Mephibosheth this day has my command
To take the portion of his grandsire's land ;
Then to thy care I now commit the soil,
To thee, thy sons, and to 'thy servants' toil,
Who shall the ground in trust assign'd possess,
The plains to culture, and the vineyards dress,
And all the products to his son produce,
A gift design'd for his more special use,
Who for his lineage shall enjoy the soil,
Suck honey-comb, and dip his foot in oil ;
For here the father stands no need of care,
As he shall always have an ample fare,
Enjoy with me good things, the best of mine,
My table dainties, and my cheering wine.
Such I command ; be faithful in th' employ,
And due requital you shall all enjoy."

Thus David ; when the pliant Ziba said :
" To this thy charge shall due regard be paid ;
For as my lord has spoken to his will,
His servants shall his gracious views fulfil."

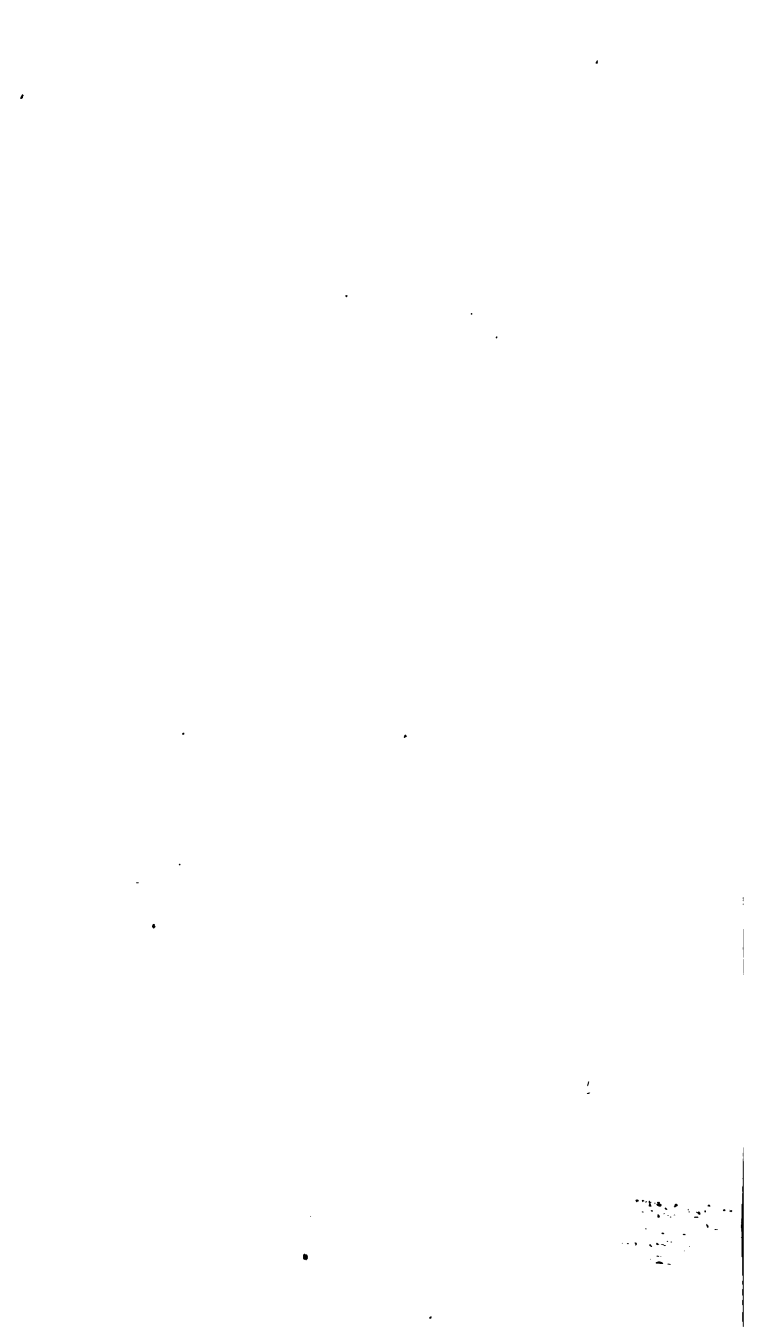
Thus as the king commanded, so it was ;
So for a season do all matters pass ;
The father's wants the pages quick relieve,
Who had the honour with the king to live,
While Ziba and his house together yield
The son the treasures of the fruitful field.

Now came the period when the mother earth
Received a monarch by the stroke of death ;
The king of Ammon died ;—for princes must
Like other mortals mingle with the dust,
Go to that place where countless thousands go,
But none return the state of things to show,
From which no power, though potent, can defend ;
Where mortal pomp and gorgeous glories end ;
And close at once all lower mundane things,
E'en all within the sweeping grasp of kings.
Then well for those the King of kings to know
To be their succour when they thus must go,
To ease the pang severe at parting breath,
And light the gloom that shades the vale of death,
In hope to change the crown where toils attend
For one in heaven with joys that never end ;
Or else far better had their station here
Been an allotment in an humbler sphere,
With that sweet peace, that earnest near the
close,
Which points to regions of unmix'd repose,
And which should ever be our ardent aim
Above life's trifles, and the trump of fame.
This life can only its own treasures give,
And all these cease when mortals cease to live :
They may last years, or end where they began ;
(Such feeble hold has poor dependent man !)
When—when ! the sinner a sad change must know
From these short pleasures to eternal woe !

While virtuous souls but quit this transient pain
For bliss triumphant without end to reign,
In durance when the adamantine bust
Of the proud conqueror shall dissolve in dust,
This globe itself be from its centre hurl'd,
And spirits only shall survive the world.

Eternity !—eternity !—a space that can
Be never fathom'd by the mind of man,
For with this life compared, the mighty main
Falls short in measure with a drop of rain !

END OF BOOK THE SEVENTH.



D A V I D.

Book the Eighth.

ARGUMENT.

David sends to condole with Hanun on the death of his father.—His messengers are ill treated.—Hanun fearing the consequence, prepares for war.—The two powers meet in battle, but David gains a complete victory.—David is again engaged in contest with the Syrians, who lose the field, with 40,000 slain, and their chief commander.—David at home is tempted to commit adultery with Bathsheba.—Her husband, Uriah, is sent for from the army, then at the siege of Rabbah, to cover their connexion; but without effect.—He is basely ordered to be placed in a dangerous situation at the siege, and is killed.—David afterwards takes the widow to be his wife.—Nathan is sent to him with a severe message for his crimes.—The child (the offspring of the connexion) sickens and dies.—Solomon, the second son, is born, who afterwards became wonderful for wisdom and greatness.—Rabbah is taken.—Amnon deflowers his sister Tamar.—Absalom consoles her, and takes her kindly to his house.

DAVID.

Book the Eighth.

O'er Ammon now, by right, succeeds the son
And in his early years ascends the throne;
When seeing that a brother king was dead,
Thus David to his privy-council said :
“ I feel for Hanun since his sire is gone ;
For, though ascending to enjoy the throne,
Yet for the present he will doubtless find
Strong filial feelings to depress his mind ;
Then I will send ambassadors express
The youth to comfort, and his throne to bless;
To cheer his spirits, and to let him know
A brother prince participates in woe,
Feels with the son what such a loss must be;
For he has been a steady friend to me ;

And with a wish that we may hence maintain
Pacific concord, and auxiliars reign."

Thus well-disposed, some men of trust are sent
With consolations on the late event ;
Who pleased, now seek the Ammonitish court,
Sure of good welcome with the kind report ;
An audience gain'd, they, void of anxious fear,
The royal message innocently bear,
In soothing language speak ;—then back with-
draw,
And wait an answer ere they turn to go.

Meanwhile the princes gain the monarch's ear,
And thus possess him with ill-founded fear :
" Dost thou believe," they say, " that these attend
To speak from David as an honest friend,
To bear his will upright without disguise,
From which no harm can in the future rise ?
Duplicity we rather fear and see,
And mischiefs brooding that will fall on thee ;
For peace with guileful tongue they now proclaim
Whilst thy destruction is their secret aim :
And first the city's weakest part to know,
Then by its fall to work thy overthrow ;
But be thou wise, nor caught by such pretence,
For timely caution is the best defence."

The new-raised king, in fear and great dismay,
Too quickly put his better thoughts away,

O'ercome by those of more experienced age,
The hoary-headed, and the crafty sage.
Back then he call'd the men to reprimand,
And give them orders to depart the land:
But ere dismiss'd he adds a foul disgrace,
First in the aspect of each mangled face,
Which was half-shaven; then their costly vests
He cut half off, and only left the waists.
Thus ill abused, they leave the vulgar court,
And homeward bend to bear the strange report;
But on the confines of their native land
They blush for shame, and halting make a stand.
Meantime to David some had borne report
Of their ill treatment at the pagan court,
Who sends to meet them with this strict command,
To move no step on their offended land,
But clothing fresh, at Jericho remain
Until in full their beards were grown again.

This was complied with;—when a second
thought

To Hanun's council keen reflection brought:
They now consider'd that so foul a stain
Would not unpunish'd with the king remain;
And whether right or wrong their judgments were,
They now must end it by the dint of war.
They knew their great opponent;—that with
shame
Surrounding nations trembled at his name,

And that no force within their feeble land
Could in defence against his fury stand ;
Hence all alert to neighbouring states they fly,
To gain of men and arms a strong supply.
A thousand silver talents he expends,
To fee the force and satisfy his friends,
Who more than thirty thousand chariots send,
And troops in train as if to know no end ;
With whom the king of great Maachah's band
Comes high in state, and foremost in command,
All to unite to meet the Jews in rage,
And more than equal in the field engage. :

David apprized, his forces gather'd round,
And soon prepared to take the hostile ground ;
His warrior Joab, whom he trusted most,
Placing commander of the mighty host.

Strong were the Ammonites, and pouring came
From the strong city to the field of fame :
Without the gates they range the lines along,
While on the walls the gazing people throng.
The subsidiary men divided stand,
And bright in armour form a potent band,
While all, like swarming locusts, spread the plain,
As if by numbers sure the point to gain.
This Joab saw, and as he found the need,
He thus commanded how they should proceed ;
“ Go,” says the gen’ral, “ let this vet’ran band
Abishai lead, and warrior-like command ;

Before the Ammonites your forces place,
And mine, divided, their allies shall face,
That when the armies in the fight engage,
And all with fury show their mettled rage,
We may to each a watchful care extend,
And, as required, the needful succour lend.
Be valiant then—be lion-like, and brave ;
Defend your country, and your cities save :
Let nothing lack, nor from your duty swerve ;
Then leave the issue to that God we serve."

The charge thus given, he raised his studded
shield ;
And firm in courage, faced the Syrian field ;
But short the contest, for the hired host
Soon turn'd their backs, and thus the battle lost :
For when the Ammonites their friends beheld
(These noted warriors) thus desert the field,
They saw no chance to still the wide alarms,
And vain to brave it with their single arms.
They then gave way—turn'd to the back the
shield,
And quitted thus the ill-supported field,
Returning quick through city-gate and bar,
Foil'd—blank—and weary in this hopeless war.

Th' engagement ending thus, king David's men
Return'd victorious to their homes again,
Their city enter'd with triumphant car,
And blazing emblems of successful war.

But short the respite, for the Syrian host
Brook'd not the battle they so meanly lost ;
Then in aggression they resume again
The desperate struggle on the hostile plain.
Recruited well, and all arranged with care,
They move in prospect of successful war ;
But here deceived again—again they feel
The sweeping influence of opposing steel :
Not all their force, though all their states appear,
Could move the Hebrews to desponding fear ;
For great the difference was :—the pagan host
Could only of their helpless idols boast ;
Whilst Israel's forces in their warfare trod
Beneath the banner of their matchless God.

Tremendous volleys now of arrows flew
Like showers of hail, and with dire havoc slew,
When such Philistines as survived the dead,
The field deserting; in confusion fled.
Wide was the carnage on that fatal day,
And for the challenge dearly did they pay,
For forty thousand horsemen (sad to tell)
Beneath the weapons of the victors fell,
And their great chief, the leader of the host,
His life in forfeit of vain bravery lost,
Whilst thousands more who drove the martial car,
Resign'd their lives in that decisive war.
Horrific sight !—for, though 'tis understood
As forfeit life of only pagan blood,

Yet human nature views, with feelings keen,
And shrinks appall'd at such a dreadful scene !

A rout thus perfect show'd they strove in vain,
And brought conviction once renew'd again,
For loss on loss sustained, they saw in all
A certain tendence to a final fall ;
When, through imperious need, they humbly deign
To sue for peace and quietude again.
This they obtain ; but now, alas ! they know
To whom they must in servile bondage bow ;
For kings and people seal their mournful doom,
To Israel serve in all the times to come,
And clinch the final link, with grievous pain
Of their coercive bonds and galling chain.

Some time elapsed ;—when wars again were
waged,
And Jews and Gentiles in the field engaged :
Many their contests ;—yet, as heretofore,
The Hebrews proved all paramount in power ;
Yet Rabbah held out siege, nor would it yield
To all the batterings of th' assailing field :
And Joab here was eagerly employ'd,
While David took his ease, and home enjoy'd ;
But criminal it proved, as oft the case,
That ease gives birth to crimes, and brings disgrace.

Ungrateful task in one we love so well,
Of deeds we censure and condemn to tell !

But truth demands ; nor are we left to choose
The pleasing traits, and all reverse refuse,
For, faithful to historic facts in all,
We must with virtues intermix a fall ;
And in narration now, alas ! succeed
Lamented errors, and a horrid deed !

Once in an evening when the solar ray
Had dropt progressive on the western way,
The king, as wont, when fervid heat declined,
Rose from his bed, the cooling air to find,
And on the palace, viewing objects, stood,
Or walking, wander'd in a musing mood ;
(For there flat roofs down to this time prevail,
That in the breeze the inmates may regale ;)
When from the place thus elevated high,
A beauteous female caught his roving eye,
Drawn there at parting with the torrid beam,
To lave and wash in the translucent stream.
Unhappy sight !—in a weak hour assail'd,
Nature proved strong, and over grace prevail'd ;
The sensual passion touch'd his yielding heart,
And ruled triumphant o'er the better part :
As he gave way, desires grew to excess ;
Resistance weaken'd, and he would possess.
Indulging thus in an unlawful flame,
It proved his grief, and stigmatized his name,
To us transmitted on the sacred page
Through every century to the present age.

Down David comes, and quick inquiry makes
What female there her recreation takes,
And finds she is Uriah's lovely wife,
Joy of his youth, and comfort of his life :
Strong barrier this, that e'en the very name
Should guard a female from a lawless flame ;
Yet now so lost, and gone in mind astray,
No right or reason must oppose his way,
For some he orders, with unblushing face,
To bring Bathsheba to his rude embrace ;
When soon his menials, as directed, bear
Their master's message to the pliant fair,
Who, alike servile to a royal head,
Gives up the honours of her nuptial bed,
Suffering the mandate of a king to be
Above the influence of her chastity.
Ah, feeble woman ! couldst thou not withstand,
In virtue steadfast, though a king's command ?
No ! weak—she yields—far, far her honour fled,
And thus obsequious to the court is led,
There, in illicit intercourse of shame,
To blot her virtue, and disgrace her name.

Improper sights may catch the purest eye,
But turn'd aside, it will the snare deny :
So may wrong thoughts invade a virtuous mind,
But check'd—they fly, nor leave a stain behind ;
Yet if indulged they will a taint impart,
Increase and strengthen, and corrupt the heart.

Then hadst thou, David, thus with care repress'd
The embryo evil while within thy breast,
It never could to any act have come,
And would have spared thee an afflicting doom,
With many a bitter and a private tear,
From keen reflections, which thou found'st severe;
Yet if thy innate principle had fail'd,
When crimson errors thus the mind assail'd,
Hadst thou but moved within an humbler sphere,
Or lived where kings with proper bounds appear,
At that weak time an interposing hand
Might have diverted thy unjust command ;
In pleading acted a substantial part,
And saved thy honour, and a wounded heart.
But, helpless man !—despotic power was sway'd ;
Thy will was law, and all that will obey'd.
None of these friends in time of need arose,
To ward thy vesture and the deed oppose ;
But thou wast left—left to thyself in all,
To nobly conquer, or to meanly fall ;
And strongly here the tempter's wiles assail'd,
The mind indulged it, and the sin prevail'd.
Our favoured states time and attention cost,
But if unguarded, they may soon be lost ;
So proved it here—a caution left to all,
No watch to slacken, for the best may fall !

Ere long th' effects of these embraces rose
To meet the eye, and threaten to expose ;

When David, anxious to avoid the shame,
Would gladly pass it in the husband's name,
Upon Uriah, who in martial life
Had long been absent from his faithless wife.
This to effect, he sent in speed away
To where the armies near to Rabbah lay,
And call'd this soldier home, who thoughtless
came,
But not to cover their adult'rous shame ;
When unsuspecting he attends the court
From his commander with the day's report.

An audience gain'd—the king, in seeming
zeal,
Inquires his welfare, and the armies' weal ;
Takes his commission from the seat of war,
And to the bearer thus extends his care :
“ Far hast thou come with dust and heat
opprest,
Go, wash thy feet, and take thy welcome rest ;
Prepare no victuals, nor refreshing wine,
For I will send them from the best of mine.”

So said—Uriah turns to quit the dome,
But stops far short of his enticing home ;
For at the porch the guards stand anxious there,
To make inquiry on the pending war :
Nor goes he further, but the whole of night
Sleeps with his comrades till the dawn of light:

Thus, by Divine control, the scheme became
Abortive of the wish to hide their shame ;
Which known to David, forth a message goes
To bring Uriah to assign the cause.

The king interrogates, and shows all care
As if still anxious for his better fare ;
“ Why didst thou not,” says he, “ last night
employ

Thy vacant hours in thy domestic joy,
And there indulge, when so with toil oppress,
In grateful comforts, and nocturnal rest.”
To whom the soldier, in a martial strain,
Returns this answer to the king again :
“ When Israel, Judah, and the ark abide
In tents scarce cover'd when the tempests ride ;
And Joab, and his military train,
Exposed, encamp'd upon the field remain,
Shall I, their comrade, take a better fare
Than what attaches to the men of war ?
Forbid it me !—yes, yes, my king shall know,
I prize the warrior, and his deeds I do.”

Such firm reply convinced the royal mind
He tried in vain this subterfuge to find ;
Yet still he hopes he may by wine obtain
What thus in senses he can never gain ;
He therefore now adopts another plan,
To guile the hero, and to gain the man.
“ Stay then,” says he, “ with me another day,
And when I've bless'd thee thou shalt go thy way.”

With this, Uriah, faithful to his lord,
In pliant humour took the day's abode,
But little thinking that the kindness shown
Was false pretention, and the end his own.

The wine thus plied with an unsparing use,
It proved the medium of a foul abuse ;
It robb'd the man (an evil end to suit)
Of his distinction from the common brute,
Of noble reason, which was given us here
To rule creation in this lower sphere.
Bereft of this, Divine distinction ends ;
Man, thus reduced, to lowest rank descends ;
From governor of all he then may tread
The field with cattle, as no more their head ;
For how are we above the bestial kind
But in the blessing of the precious mind ?
Debased in this, we break th' Almighty's plan,
And sink below the dignity of man.
What !—with Omnipotence shall mortals play,
To use his gifts, or sport these gifts away ?
Sport with a blessing man could never give,
And should be prized as long as mortals live.

Ere now the night its dusky mantle spread,
Th' unguarded soldier found a swimming
head ;
The fuming juice inebriating rose,
As if to aid in a perfidious cause.

Thus fitted for the king, who, sober still,
Thought he had made him subject to his will,
He sends him home to put him to the test,
And kindly bids him to indulge in rest.
Uriah leaves ;—but here again is seen
The God of justice still to intervene ;
For overruled, and not allow'd to gain
His wife's embraces, but at court remain,
He with the servants there takes up abode,
And foils the projects of his guilty lord,
For there again, until another day,
He slept his night and drunkenness away.
But David still his shifts must try again,
To weaken or eradicate the stain ;
And rather bend to any grosser deed
Than not in measure, or in fall, succeed.

How error leads to error—how the will,
When once let loose, proceeds from ill to ill !
For David now another scheme began,
Projecting murder to remove the man ;
The life of this poor injured one to take,
(When he should rather restitution make,)
That by his exit he might take away
A husband's rights, that now as barriers lay,
And leave her free for him a nuptial prize ;
Which thus to bar, a lawful claim denies.

In order then to execute his plan,
He writes to Joab by this injured man,

An unsuspected charge for him to bear,
E'en his own sentence to the field of war.
Short was the letter, though so vast its ill,
Which, thus laconic, bore the monarch's will :
" Assign Uriah (and let nought debar)
Chief place of danger in the brunt of war ;
Abruptly then from your opponents fly,
And leave him fighting that he thus may die."

See the poor soldier toiling to the war
With his death-warrant under special care,
Little suspecting that his king, so kind,
His mortal ruin underneath design'd.
Deep pity at the guile, and death so near,
May almost start the sympathetic tear,
For this duped man, robb'd of a lovely wife,
And thus intrigued into the loss of life.

Arrived at camp, he blithesome meets the chief,
And hands his message with the fatal brief.
Joab, all care on what the lines impart,
Hides with a smile the hardness of his heart ;
For all-subservient, and to his disgrace,
He soon assigns the well-selected place,
The fatal spot, where greatest dangers lay,
And the besieged may such a victim slay.
There station'd by his captain's prompt command,
He bravely fought, and firmly kept his stand ;
But overpower'd, and now in vain to fly,
He dies a martyr, but he knows not why !

Now Joab felt severe regret and shame ;
For some reverses more than usual came,
Which his dispatches must reciting bear
In just narration of their deeds in war ;
But, jealous that such cross events as these
Will check his honour, and the king displease,
He bids the bearer of the adverse news
See if the king a rising temper shows ;
“ And if,” says he, “ he should thy charge
 receive
With lowering aspect, and the tidings grieve,
Add as a message by thyself supplied,
That in our losses bold Uriah died.”

Thus charged, the faithful messenger proceeds,
With his dispatches of a tale of deeds.
He first delivers what he has in care,
Then adds himself, as their reverse in war :
“ Forth from the city came a daring host,
And in the contest many men were lost,
Whom to the gates we drove, but, sad to tell,
Disasters follow'd and some warriors fell,
For off their walls a cloud of arrows flew,
Forced back our army, and a number slew ;
Some stood too hardy, while a portion fled,
And bold Uriah is amongst the dead.”

David confused, and with mix'd feelings tost,
Heard the proceedings of the suffering host,

Until at last, (what seems to cover all,)
Comes the conclusion of Uriah's fall :
This smoothed the whole of ill successes past ;
For now he thought all was complete at last.
But sad deception ! for thou soon must find,
What should have come before—a wounded
mind !
And ere thou canst conciliation know
Thou must pay dear, and deep in penance bow.

So lull'd secure, as if resign'd he bends,
And reconciled, this soothing language sends :
“ To Joab bear this strict request from me :
Let not reverses quash the zeal in thee,
For know the sword no mark'd distinction bears,
But strikes all parties in uncertain wars.
Let ill success serve only to improve,
To raise your caution, and your vigour move :
Surround the city, and convince the foe
Your means are sure to work their overthrow,
For though awhile they may the place defend,
Yet all must in their subjugation end.”

The gladden'd herald, quitted of his pain,
Prepares to seek the field of war again,
Rejoiced that he may now to Joab bring
Such grateful answers from their cheering king,
Whom well he knows it will with pleasure fill
Amidst reverses which he brooks so ill.

When the sad news first greets Bathsheba's ears,
She feels her loss, and drops some sorrowing tears ;
But when the time of feeble grief is o'er,
The king attempts her losses to restore,
To fill the vacuum in her widow'd life ;
For soon he takes her to become his wife,
As if secure to pass all smoothly o'er,
Nor of his crimes to fear detection more ;
Yet vain !—the sight of man thou may'st defy,
But thou canst not elude th' Omniscient Eye ;
That Power in secret sees thy deeds of shame,
And will thy errors to the world proclaim,
Nor punish short, but many trials raise
With bitter gall to mix thy future days.

Thus David still drove on a fatal road
Against his conscience, and against his God,
Who, long-forbearing, now to treat began,
And sent his servant to the clouded man.
Hence Nathan's charged to go, and clearly bring
These deeds of darkness to convict the king,
In which with art he on the subject broke,
And circumventing thus in covert spoke :
“Two men,” says he, “dwelt once within a
town,
The one was poor, the other wealthy grown ;
The poor man's stock consisted of one head,
A single ewe-lamb which he bought and fed ;
His children's pleasure, and their infant care,
And whom he suffer'd at their board to fare ;

And, well-contented with his little store,
He lived most happy, though he lived but poor.
His richer neighbour, with a mind elate,
Enjoy'd abundance in superior state,
His herds of cattle overran the plain,
And flocks of thousands stock'd his vast domain ;
Yet evil moved him, though so great his store,
To look with envy on this man so poor :
For once a stranger on his journey came,
When (lost to feeling and devoid of shame)
He spared his own, in numbers thus so great,
And took this only lamb his guests to treat;
On which he revell'd with unconscious smart,
To the deep-wounding of his neighbour's
heart."

David was roused at such a cruel deed,
And saw it right that justice should succeed,
When, as a judge to whom a case was brought,
He thus condemn'd it; and he thus was caught :
" As lives the Lord, who will all actions try,
The man thus guilty shall assuredly die,
And from his flock fourfold he shall restore,
The lamb so taken from the man so poor ;
Because he acted so unjust a part,
And show'd no pity—but a harden'd heart."

This said—the prophet in reply began :
" The guilt of this is thine.—Thou art the man !"

He paused a moment, deep to fix the stroke,
But ere reply, thus in addition spoke :
“ Thus saith the Lord : I took thee from the
plain,
A shepherd's life, o'er Israel to reign ;
Deliver'd thee when on the brink to fall,
And safely freed thee from the wrath of Saul ;
His palace gave thee, and his boundless store,
His wives, his treasure, and his sovereign power ;
And if thy conduct had in all been true,
I would have made thee vast additions too,
My many favours I would not repress,
But in my blessing I would further bless ;
Why then forsake thy Lord's command, (his
right,)
And do such evils in his holy sight !
Thou vilely hast a marriage bed defiled,
Become the father of a spurious child,
And kill'd Uriah !—Vengeance then is mine,
And blast and suffering, as thy ~~des~~, are thine !
Know then, for such a disregard of me,
A train of evils are entail'd on thee.
The sword shall not from thee its rage decline,
And thou shalt witness that all power is mine ;
For, though thy deeds have been in secret
done,
Yet I will punish as before the sun !”

David confounded stood at such a doom ;
He saw his crimson guilt, and what should come ;

For he beheld what was in justice due,
And his heart trembled at the dismal view.
He speechless mused, while rapid thought
display'd
His vast offences—and he sunk dismay'd.
At last he spoke, (but deeply felt each word,)
“Ah, woe is me!—I’ve sinn’d against the Lord.”
Too full to add, his tongue abruptly fell,
And silence spoke what language could not tell.

A solemn pause ensued;—each wounded
heart
Felt—and in feeling took a mutual part.
At last the prophet, overpower’d to see
The king’s contrition in such deep degree,
His speech resumed, in milder tone, again,
And somewhat soften’d his o’erwhelming pain;
For, though compunction did but short appear,
It was heartfelt, most pungent and severe;
Which Nathan witness’d—and commission’d
still,
He further thus reveal’d his Maker’s will:
“Though thy offences are of deepest dye,
Yet ’tis not doom’d that thou thyself shalt die;
Thy sin, as sin, is past; yet hear and know,
That life for life must in the infant go;
And thanks be thine, that thus transferr’d
shall be
Such mild atonement for the crime in thee.

Yet as thy sins to enemies afford
Pretext to lessen and blaspheme thy Lord,
He will not pass them, but let others see
Thy deeds are punish'd as they ought to be."

The prophet closed ; and having done his part
He leaves him mourning with a broken heart,
With tears and prayers in supplicating strain
Once more the favour of his God to gain.

Soon the poor infant, struck by secret blast,
In plaintive illness sicken'd to its last ;
The sight of which, so conscious of the blame,
The king distress'd, and all his powers o'ercame,
For its deep groans and suffering tones impart
A sting of conscience to his guilty heart.
To earth he fell, and, in a contrite prayer,
Begg'd that the Lord would still the infant spare ;
And there in sorrow laid through all the night,
Till morn diffused its oriental light ;
Slighting all comfort from his friends around
To serve with bread, or raise him from the ground.
Some tedious days the suffering infant past,
And on the seventh it calmly breathed its last.
Sad news they thought to meet the father's ear,
And far too poignant for his heart to bear ;
"For how," said they, "can he be made to know,
And not o'erwhelm him in a flood of woe,
Since we beheld him with such sorrows strive
While yet the child was in our arms alive ?"

This secret whispering David now perceived,
And soon the servants from their straits relieved,
For from the ground he quickly raised his head,
And shortly question'd—"Is the infant dead?"
"Yes—he is dead," they answer him with fears,
And look to see his grief in floods of tears ;
But quite reverse ; for sorrows seem'd to cease,
And his mind settle, reconciled in peace.
Up now he rose ; shook off his deep distress.
To self resume, to wash, anoint, and dress :
And thus refresh'd, and thus again restored,
He sought the temple of his gracious Lord,
To whom, as due, and as the first in thought,
His thanks and praise in gratitude he brought,
And deeply humbled, all he made to bow,
In reverent fear, and soul-prostrated awe.

This duty now perform'd, he homeward bent,
And took refreshment, settled and content,
Brooding no longer on the things now past,
No more disposed to shed his tears and fast.

The thoughtful servants stood amazed to see,
And wonder'd why such signal change could be.
At last some ventured, and the silence broke,
Who meekly thus interrogating spoke :
"May't please the king permission to afford
To ask a question of our honour'd lord,
From those who in the griefs that swell'd his heart
Participated in an ample part.

May then we know why thou shouldst mourn
and weep
While the child lived, and rigid fasting keep ;
But when 'tis dead, and now for ever lost,
Thou art no more with such afflictions tost,
But hast cast off thy late distressing pain,
And, joy'd, we see thee as thyself again ?"

The king return'd, and from their wonders
freed,
Whilst mildly thus he reconciled the deed :
" While the child lived, I pray'd and kept a fast,
In hopes thereby that God would bless at last,
And spare the infant ; but this now is o'er ;
The child is gone, and will return no more ;
The trying conflict I behold to cease,
And nought remains to discompose my peace.
Yes, he is gone, from whence none can restore,
Where pains and sickness shall be known no
more :
Yes, dear lost child, thou canst not come to me,
But I must follow, and shall go to thee."

Some months roll'd on, with all thus reconciled,
When to their joy was born another child ;
A prodigy in nature !—such an one
As no glad father ever call'd a son !
Solomon, the wise ;—whom sacred page
Renowns for wisdom down through every age :

One who of human knowledge gain'd such store
As none of mortals ever knew before :
Whose deep researches to the view unfurl'd
A fund of treasures to a wondering world ;
Which e'en to us, in multifarious kind,
Strongly exhibit a transcendent mind.
Yet after all, when bounteously were given
Treasures on earth, and blessings down from
 heaven,
With matchless wisdom, all things here to know,
From the stupendous to the least below ;
Riches and grandeur—honour's highest name—
To rule as king of kings, and first in fame,
With every gift that mortals here can have,
Whatever will could wish, or passions crave ;
Yet happiness, alas ! he seldom knew,
For at each grasp the object further flew ;
Insatiate still, a vacuum rack'd his breast ;
A something wanting—something unpossess'd ;
When back recounting all his pleasures past,
He summ'd them up to this amount at last :
“ That all that man, as man, could here enjoy
Had their vexations and a sure alloy ;
For all was vanity and vacant show ;
And disappointment mark'd all things below.”

• Leaving domestic cares, again we go
To war's sad ravage, and the house of woe ;
For Joab now on Rabbah made advance,
Nor spared the havoc of the wandering lance.

The city yielding to his powerful sword,
He sends a message to invite his lord :
"Come," says this general, "come, my king,
and see
The city taken, lest it fall to me,
Whilst in thy name it should itself resign,
And to thy honour grace the page of time."

At this the king prepares without delay,
Collects vast numbers, and drives on his way,
All with flush'd spirits, so secure to gain
The humbled relics of the suffering plain.
Arrived;—the weaken'd city holds no more,
But all surrenders to superior power,
And e'en its king, whose pond'rous crown bestows
A glittering trophy to the victor's brows.
A crown with stones of brilliant hues emboss'd,
And burnish'd gold in tasteful splendour cross'd.
But here all ends not, though a wretched state,
For keener sufferings on the people wait ;
The king—his subjects—and what life sustain
Complete the slaughters of the hapless plain :
All undistinguish'd fall ;—child—husband—wife,
In final exist to the last of life !

Thus all extinct, a weighty mass of store,
Spoils of the conquer'd, o'er the land they bore,
Which to the city in high triumph came,
Whilst crowds of thousands blazed the victor's
name.

Not long had David triumph'd in his joy,
Before reverses his delights alloy ;
Not foils in war, nor from a foreign foe,
But home-bred evils, and domestic woe.
He had a daughter of engaging mien,
Possess'd of beauty—of her sex the queen ;
For whom her brother Amnon vilely came
To foster feelings of a lawless flame :
He craved the damsel ; but, as usual then,
These daughters seldom intermix'd with men,
And thus debarr'd access, he dragg'd the pain
Of disappointment, and he craved in vain.
Restless, he sunk ; which soon his cousin saw,
Jonadab, the subtle, and to him a foe.
Amnon he questions—" Why thus day by day,
My friend should sicken, and so waste away !
For strange it is, when every bliss seems thine,
That thou shouldst droop, and in thy person
 pine.

Wilt thou not tell me then ?—yes, tell, that I
May root the cause—or to alleviate try."

This friendly question soon the truth unveil'd,
And brought to light what long had been conceal'd :

He briefly told him in return again,
" 'Tis love for Tamar causes all my pain."

Enough was said ; it set his busy friend
Schemes to invent to gain a wicked end ;

Th' impediments he knew that block'd his way;
Hence thus he taught the guileful part to play:
"Feign thyself sick, with pains from foot to
head;
When soon thy father will attend thy bed;
Where looks will tell that thy complaints are true;
Then ask a favour to thy sufferings due,
To send thy sister to prepare some paste,
That she may bake it to thy dainty taste,
And then when busied in that favour'd hour
She will be subject to thy stronger power."

Thus, as projected, soon the father's led
In strong affection to the sickly bed,
Where with distress he hears his son complain
Of sinking sickness, and of pinching pain;
Then soon returns, for he could nought refuse,
And orders Tamar unto Amnon's house,
Some cakes to bake, his tedious taste to please,
And kindly study to promote his ease.
With speed she goes, most anxious to prepare
The grateful morsel with a sister's care,
And of suspicion void, performs her part
With all dispatch and sympathy of heart.
How canst thou, Amnon, then such service pay
With vile misconduct on that very day!

The mess was brought;—but as some friends
were near,
He would not taste until the room was clear.

These gone ; he quickly call'd the lovely maid,
And thus deceiving, in soft language said :

“ Now be thou pleased to bring the grateful
treat,

That from thy hands I may arise and eat.”

The fair one then, by duteous ardour led,
Took up the cakes, and near approach'd the bed,
When he abrupt : “ My love is strong to thee ;
Come then, my sister, yield thyself to me.”

She turn'd ;—but quickly forth he stretch'd his
arm,

Seized on her robe, and held her in alarm.

So caught, she reason'd, as she trembling stood,
And thus address'd him in a moving mood :

“ No ! brother, let me from thy grasp be freed,
Nor stain thine honour by so foul a deed ;

For no such thing in Israel should be,
Then Heaven forbid it unto thee and me.

If thus bereaved, ah ! whither could I go
To hide my blushes, and relieve my woe ?

And as for thee, would not thy shame succeed ?

‘ A fool,’ thy stigma, and abhorr'd the deed.

Then rather ask the king (a wiser part)

To give my hand—and thou shalt have my heart;
For he is kind, and when his sons apply

He seldom does the father's gift deny.”

Thus glad to shift by strong or weak excuse,
Relief she pleaded from the foul abuse,

Whilst bathed in tears, with trembling lips she
spoke ;
But all recoil'd as billows from the rock,
For no attention to her plaint he paid,
But by his strength o'ercame the struggling maid.
His end obtain'd, he knows no middle state,
For now his passions turn reversed to hate ;
E'en so opposed to one his late delight,
As not to bear her to remain in sight :
He then abruptly bids her to depart,
Regardless of her tears and heaving heart.
"Nay," she replied, "enough of grief I know,
Then add no bitters to my cup of woe,
For if such treatment to the rest succeed,
It will e'en double the atrocious deed.
Consider then—let me thy pity share,
Nor drive me onward to complete despair."
But callous still to what her feelings claim,
He persevered in harden'd deeds of shame ;
It matters not what plaint accosts his ear ;
Still void the sigh, and vain the falling tear,
For resolute, and not at once obey'd,
He calls his servants his commands to aid :
"Come," says he roughly, "for I need your
power ;
Banish this woman, and secure the door."

The servile pages, while they feel remorse,
Expel the sufferer by reluctant force,

Who slowly moves, with wringing hands, to go
Forlorn, and wandering overwhelm'd in woe.
Thus spoil'd—in grief her costly robe she tore,
The rich attire which royal virgins wore ;
Spread ashes on her auburn locks and head,
On which she placed her hand, and weeping
 stray'd :
Strong emblems these, in action, gloom, and
 dress,
Of her heart-rendings, and her deep distress.

In this sad plight soon Absalom she meets,
Who, all astonish'd, thus his sister greets ;
“ Alas ! dear sister, what has come to thee ?
Speak—and reveal—and put thy trust in me ;
For I feel anxious that I may in love
The brooding anguish of thy soul remove.”

Thus kindly question'd ;—while her tears
 prevail,
She sobs, and blushes, and reveals the tale.
A cutting tale to penetrate the ear
From one he loved—a sister very near.
Deeply he felt, and hardly brook'd the pain
From such a conduct, and so foul a stain,
Which oft in after-times disturb'd his rest ;
But close he kept it in his fostering breast,
Nor once to any one his thoughts reveal'd,
What subtle caution in his bosom seal'd :

But for the present he most kindly strove
To soothe her mind, and manifest his love:
Then thus he turns in sympathetic strain :
“ I feel, my sister, for thy poignant pain,
But seal thy lips, nor for the deed defame ;
He is our brother ;—we should share the shame.
Then to my house thy devious steps direct,
Where I will succour, and from harm protect,
And where thou shalt all consolation find
That I can render to thy drooping mind.”

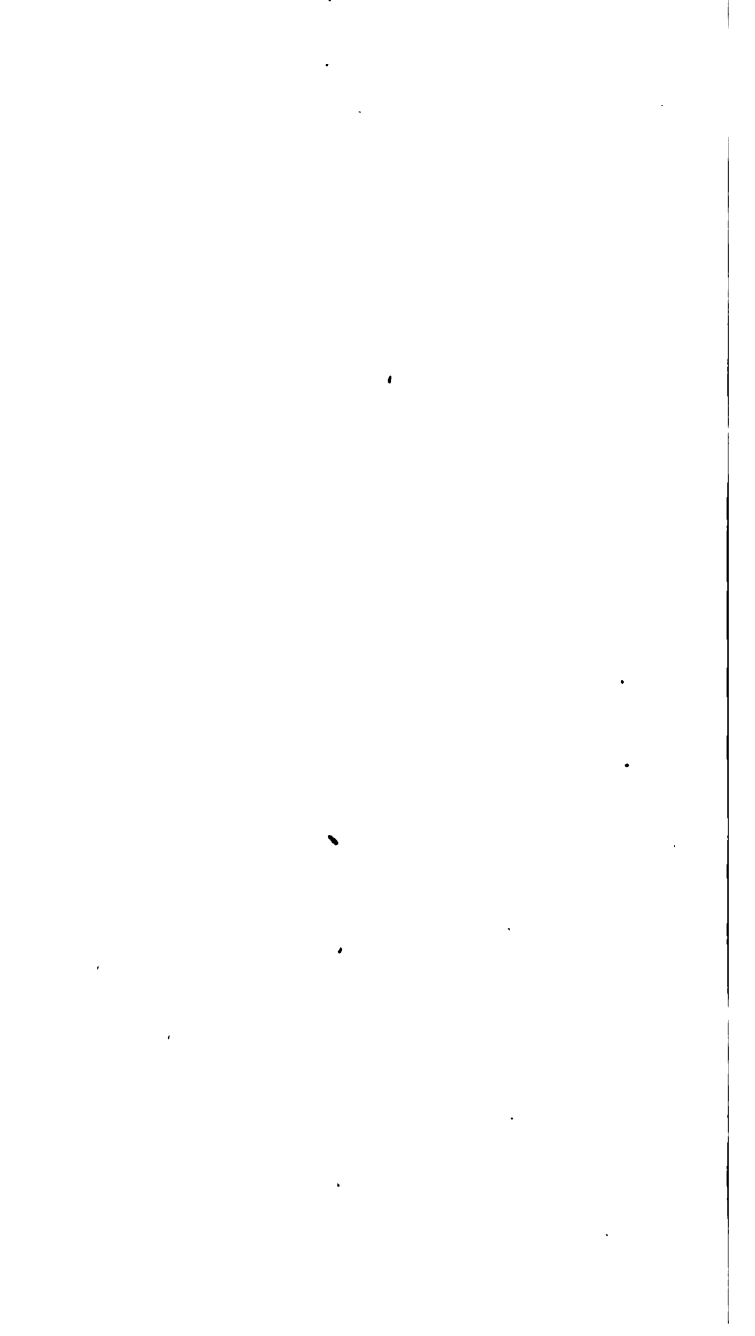
Here a paternal care the sufferer found
As balm to soften and to heal her wound ;
Coming thus opportune to give relief
When sunk and lost as in a flood of grief.
Then bathed in tears her grateful thanks she
paid,
Nor to the welcome home her steps delay'd ;
For an asylum she rejoiced to find
Where she might dwell recluse, and calm her
mind.

There for a while, beneath her brother's care
Her residence she makes, with peace her share,
Although from retrospects the eye appears
At times full pregnant with a flood of tears.
Nor is it long before events again
Her wounds re-open, and renew her pain ;
For ere two years in circling round succeed,
Amnon pays dear for his lascivious deed ;

And this too by a fratricidal blow,
A brother's act, that added to her woe,
E'en by that very brother, who thus kind
Had soothed her anguish, and relieved her mind.

Rumours afloat, soon to the palace bring
The shameful tidings to apprise the king,
That make him wroth against his graceless child,
Who thus in incest had the maid defiled ;
But remedy was past—the deed was done,
And condemnation rested with the son,
To whom indeed, in an unbiassed view,
For such a crime great punishment was due ;
Yet as with Joab, here we see again
Want of due rigour, justice to sustain,
And see with wonder how such weakness can,
By partial views, o'ercome so firm a man ;
But here, as sometimes wont, the tender part
Prevail'd, and left him with a wounded heart ;
For such his grief that rack'd his troubled breast,
By night it haunted, and by day oppress :
Yet with rebuke and counsel all past o'er,
And time restored them to their state before.

END OF BOOK THE EIGHTH.



D A V I D.

Book the Ninth.

ARGUMENT.

Absalom holds a sheep-shearing feast.—At this opportunity he devises means to have his brother Amnon slain for his base conduct to his sister Tamar.—David and his whole house lament the catastrophe.—Absalom becomes a voluntary exile for the deed, and takes refuge under the king of Geshur.—In three years' time he is restored to his native land and city, by the artful contrivance of Joab.—After his return he ungratefully sets up in princely style, and endeavours to disaffect the people to the king, his father, in order to usurp his throne.—He goes with two thousand men in his train to Hebron, to be there proclaimed king.—David and his household leave the court in fear and distress.—In their flight Ziba meets them, and gains upon David, by craft, an unjust grant from him.—Shimei curses and abuses David in his adversity.

DAVID.

Book the Ninth.

Twice had the globe performed its annual race
Poised on its axis in unbounded space,
And brought again, through frigid winter past,
The season when the flocks their fleeces cast.
Now Absalom, who held a country seat,
Prepares to shear, and give a rural treat,
Where rarest fowls to grace the feast were bred,
The calf well fatted, and the lambkin fed,
With wines the richest, and in store profuse;
But all design'd for an atrocious use.
For this he calls a round of friends to share
The jovial banquet o'er his bleating care.
But first he must his royal sire invite,
Who from his station holds the prior right;

Which he performs as with a filial mind,
Though more disposed to leave the king behind.
David refused, as more than right to spend,
Should he with all his equipage attend.
He urged it not, but importunately prest
For Amnon's presence, and with him the rest,
As it would strange appear to every friend
If none should from his father's house attend.
This all seem'd pleasant, generous, and kind ;
But veil'd a plot for evil ends design'd.

David, unconscious of such views, consents,
No grief foreboding in the day's events,
But pleased that thus they might in friendship
pay
A social visit, and enjoy the day ;
Yet gave his blessing, knowing that the bowl
At such carousals often taints the soul,
Though distant far the thought that it would
tend
To gender discord, and with death would end.

Such good success a stimulus became
To Absalom's revenge, and fed the flame ;
He therefore goes with confidence and speed,
Bold to disclose his pre-concerted deed,
Yet not to those who could and would prevent,
By wiser counsel, such a dire event,
But those selected from his servile crew
Those callous minds would aid his sanguine view.

These now convened, before their master stood,
And from his mouth received this charge of blood :
“ Long have you known,” says he, “ what none
should know,

Our source from Amnon of domestic woe,
In which in justice death became his due :
And now that justice I commit to you.
Know then my will ;—when at the jovial feast
The fumes of wine begin to swell his breast,
Just at my word, ere I can close my breath,
Rise you as one, and strike with certain death.
Fear not what may to such an act succeed,
For I command, and will defend the deed ;
Then let the courage of the valiant warm,
And deal the vengeance with a powerful arm.”

Such an unnatural speech might well have
fill'd

Each breast with horror, and each feeling chill'd ;
But the reverse—they all obsequious stand
Ready and rash to deal the dire command.

The day arrived—the brethren prompt attend,
And for th' enjoyment many a social friend ;
All blithe in aspect, having left all care,
For buxom pleasures, and a bounteous fare.
The feast began ; hilarity arose,
And Amnon jovial, though amidst his foes ;
With jocund heart he push'd the goblet round,
And join'd in chorus to the music's sound,

Till the brisk juice with potent guile began
To rob the senses, and unman the man.

Now came the tragic scene ! “ To arms, arise ! ”
The murd’ring brother to th’ assassins cries.
No sooner said, than, eager for the strife,
They rush on Amnon to deprive of life ;
And short the conflict ! for a mortal wound
Soon lays the victim prostrate on the ground.
A piteous eye on Absalom he cast,
But then too late—the fatal stroke had past,
And filmy dimness quickly quench’d the sight,
To wrap in shades of never ending night.
Life could not be recall’d—speech was denied ;
He sicken’d—fainted—breathed his last, and
died !

Astonish’d at the sad heart-rending sight,
The trembling brothers only thought of flight ;
For next to him, they had much cause to fear
They might the burden of his vengeance bear,
Since with the deed none could the reason know
Why he was singled for the deadly blow.
Thus struck with awe, and terror in each face,
They haste from danger, and desert the place ;
With beating hearts and greatest speed obtain
Their rich-trimm’d mules, and drive along the
plain,
The thong well plying on each labouring beast,
Glad thus with life to quit the fatal feast,

Where now the music and the mirthful mind
Fly off at once, and mourning leave behind.

Though quick their speed, yet news still
quicker went,
And as it posted magnified th' event,
E'en to th' extent, ere it could David gain,
"That this vile son had all his brethren slain!"
The king, who entered into full belief,
Felt the keen anguish of parental grief,
And in th' excess his royal robe he tore,
Mourning for all, as in the world no more ;
The servants too in sympathy accord,
Faithful in feeling with their suff'ring lord.

Thus hastily they mourn'd, with garments
rent,
In full assurance of the sad event ;
When Jonadab (who more of matters knows,
As well he may, for he was much the cause)
Beholds the king indulge excessive grief,
And thus explaining tries to give relief :
"Let not thy fears deem all the princes gone,
For be assured the loss is only one :
That one is Amnon, who has dearly paid
For his misconduct to the injured maid ;
For Absalom in secret, well I know,
Has meditated some revengeful blow ;
Then moderate thy grief, for I maintain,
With firm belief, that he alone is slain."

Just as he closed, the watch who stood the
day

Beheld a train quick posting on the way,
And Jonadab apprized, who, glad to bring
Such welcome tidings to the suffering king,
In haste address'd him to relieve the stroke,
And thus confirming to the monarch spoke :
"See ! yonder see !—what I have said is true,
The rest are coming, and are full in view."

Soon they arrive, establish what was said,
"That they escaped, but left their brother dead."
This served to blunt the agony of grief,
Though very short of giving full relief :
For though the act might be confined to one,
Yet there was death, and Amnon surely gone ;
Gone too by means which greatly added pain,
In cool contrivance by a brother slain.
Hence now on him alone their sorrows turn,
For whom the house in general feeling mourn;
But David feels in chief the wounding stroke,
For in none else the father's woes awoke ;
And oft did he his tears in private pay,
On sad remembrance of that tragic day.

The author of this deed dared not to stand
Within the bounds of his offended land,
But, feeling guilt with strong convictive force,
To distant parts he quickly bent his course ;

To Geshur's plains he all alone withdrew,
And fled that justice so direct his due,
Where screen'd, he took his destitute abode,
A self-made exile with a foreign lord.

Three years thus spent since this vile deed
was done,
The father felt for his transported son,
This distant fugitive, in measure lost,
Become a stranger to his natal coast ;
Yet close he kept it, though sometimes the smart
Betray'd the feelings of his troubled heart.
This artful Joab at the last perceived,
Espoused the cause, and thus the case relieved.
In Tekoah lived a female, who profound
In arts and shrewdness, was afar renown'd.
To her he sends ;—she ready to fulfil
His urgent summons, hastes to know his will.
He then propounds : “ I need thy friendly aid
To feign a mourning for thy kindred dead ;
E'en to the king to personate a tale,
To gain him o'er, where intercessions fail.”
Fit for the mission, quick she gives consent,
Though yet a stranger to the chief's intent.
Then deep he clothes her in a sable weed,
And gives direction how she shall proceed—
How grief to feign as on the tragic stage,
The doleful accent, and the frantic rage ;
What tale to tell ;—when questioned what to say—
How to entreat, and for what purpose pray.

Thus furnish'd, to the king she wandering
stray'd,
And soon before him as a suppliant laid,
Low at his feet prostrated on the ground,
In seeming anguish, and in grief profound.
“ Help ! help ! O king ! ”—in faltering words
she said,
“ Thy servant help, in deepest trouble laid.”

To whom the king, in wonder and surprise :
“ Come tell thy grief, and from the dust arise.”

By this encouraged, from the earth she rose,
And thus depicted her sad tale of woes :
“ I am a widow, and lament the dead,
A dear lost husband, low in ashes laid ;
And in addition to a widow's woe,
I now am doom'd a mother's grief to know :
Two sons were mine, who, as they till'd the field,
Strove with each other ;—neither will'd to yield,
Which proved the death of one ; enough to rend
A parent's breast ;—yet here is not the end,
But I must still a further anguish know
To higher fill my bitter cup of woe ;
For all my household rise and speak as one,
To wreak their wrath on my surviving son ;
My only son ! the comfort of my age,
Become the object of their party rage,
Whom they would kill ;—his life they say is due
In retribution for the son he slew.

If so—they take the only joy I claim,
Nor leave my husband in the world a name ;
But by the deed cut off the heir at law,
And end my life in bitterness and woe.
Help then, O king ! be pleased to grant relief,
And ward thy handmaid from so great a grief ;
That blessings may on thy good deeds descend,
Prosper thy reign, and crown thy latter end."

To this the king returned : " I hear thy
prayer,
And be assured it shall have needful care.
Go to thy house—fear not—confide in me,
And I will give my charge concerning thee."

E'en this obtain'd reach'd not th' important
end

For which she plotted for her absent friend ;
Hence still she perseveres to gain her mind,
By stronger tie th' unwary king to bind ;
And warmly begs, with an expressive eye,
That he would say, " Her darling should not
die."

And adds, to clear the way, the grant to gain,
That all the wrong shall on her house remain,
If any error could be understood
In such a rescue from a scene of blood :
" Yes," firmly she repeats, " if blame should be,
I will the burden bear, and gladly free."

The king resumes : " If thou shouldst harm
sustain,
Bring here the man, and thou shalt justice gain,
For he shall mercy at thy will implore,
That none in future may offend thee more."

Though thus successful, yet it did not come
Quite to the point to bring the matter home ;
She therefore ventures to be further bold,
And thus by art to gain a better hold :
" Be pleased, O king ! to bear in mind thy God,
Who mercy shows us though He sways the rod :
Such are his attributes ; then may my lord
These nobly follow, and relief afford,
That blood-avengers may their fury cease,
And by thy mandate be compell'd to peace ;
No more to dare my remnant to destroy,
Nor touch to hurt my last and lovely boy.
Great deeds be thine ! and such as warmly suit
From grateful subjects the return of praise ;
And I the first will much ascribe to thee,
If such a blessing thou confer on me."

Thus her petition she in ardour prest,
And warmly begg'd to be at once redress'd ;
When David, to relieve her anxious fears,
And wipe away her well-dissembled tears,
Thus condescending gave his final word,
Which she accepted as her peace restored :

“Compose thyself, and to thy house repair,
For I will succour, and defend thy heir :
As lives the Lord, and here sustains us all,
One hair from him I will not grant to fall.”

This was enough at last ;—the bond was
 seal'd,
And time at hand for all to be reveal'd,
But ere applied she gently smoothed her way,
And leave thus begg'd for what she had to say :
“ I thank thy goodness, and paternal care
In granting this—the object of my prayer ;
But if permitted by my gracious lord,
I crave the freedom of another word,
Which if it please thee will at once increase
Thy heart-felt comforts, and thy kindred's peace.”

“ Say on ! ”—the king in full but briefly said,
When thus the case before his view she laid :
“ I trust my Lord will not indulge offence
At these my pleadings—though in mere pretence,
Since 'tis not for myself this cause I bring,
But as a subject loyal to my king ;
For thus in figure, and by this disguise,
'Tis my sole wish to point where error lies.
For is it right to thus restrain from home
A son, whose exile is too hard become,
Which he must deeply feel, nor thee forget,
While his exclusion all the land regret ?

And sure my lord must also bear his part,
For he possesses a susceptible heart.
Then be thou pleased to break his galling chain,
And let us see him once return'd again,
That no such fetters may thy son annoy,
To damp domestic and the general joy."

The king was pleased within, but mused a
while ;

Then thus return'd as he suppress'd a smile :
" The drift is artful, which thou thus hast plann'd,
But I suspect thou hast a helping hand ;
Say then, if I on Joab judge amiss ;
Has he not had the greatest share in this ?"

The matron paused ;—but thus abruptly caught,
It from her lips this frank confession brought :
"'Tis true, my lord ; and surely thou must be
Well versed in mystics such a fact to see :
Then I will tell, for things are hard to keep
From one empower'd to penetrate so deep. .
I then acknowledge to the certain fact
That all the scheme was Joab's cunning act.
'Twas he who, close in loyal ardour bound,
Devised the wile thy royal will to sound :
He taught me how the subject first to break,
And how in covert to my king to speak,
By any means his sovereign's grant to gain
To break the bonds that liberty restrain.

Then be thou pleased in kindness to command
His restoration to his native land,
That joy again thy subjects may possess,
And he thy goodness and thy mercy bless."

David rejoiced ; yet pleasure he conceal'd,
Except what stole away in looks reveal'd :
He here breaks off, and lets the woman go,
No more his feeling or his will to know ;
But an admittance Joab soon receives,
To whom the king this grateful order gives :
" My word has pass'd—though I perceived not
all ;

Yet let it serve the banish'd to recall ;
Your wills be granted, for I now perceive,
A strong attachment, and the people grieve.
Go then, but let the welcome deed be thine,
And fetch this erring, exiled son of mine ;
For time enough is spent in distant land
To claim protection from a foreign hand ;
Yet let him not my palace dare to see,
But dwell secluded from the court and me."

Well pleased is Joab thus to gain his end,
By any means to serve his banish'd friend ;
When to the ground he bends in reverence low,
And gives this answer as he makes his bow :
" I thank my king, who thus hast bent thine ear
This supplication in good will to hear,

And hast been pleased to let thy servant see
Such condescension to thy son and me :
Then may this son, to whom thy love appears,
Return to bless thee, many, many years."

This said, he rose ; to Geshur sped away,
Before his prince the welcome news to lay ;
Who hears the tidings with a rapturous joy,
As if no troubles could again annoy.
The gallant chieftain now he loads with praise
For the bright prospect on his future days,
And quick prepares in ardour to regain
The long lost comforts of his native plain.
Ere long he stept upon the wish'd for land,
Escorted by this military hand,
Whom thus returning many subjects meet,
Joy at his freedom, and with ardour greet ;
Then join procession, in the blythe return
Of one who pleased, and could each rank adorn ;
His person such ;—grand, and of stately height,
With limbs athletic, and an arm of might ;
Correctly featur'd—where the dimpled smile
Could speak the heart, or play the pranks of
guile ;
Of fine complexion, where diffusely spread
The blushing tincture of a healthy red.
His head full-furnish'd with rich growth of hair,
Which, trimm'd with taste, gave a majestic air :
Of address free, and studious to please ;
Of temper mild, and every act at ease,

That when survey'd and criticised around
From head to foot, no blemish could be found,
E'en so complete in all, he stood as one
Whom few could equal, and exceed him none.

His home he reach'd, and was with joy received,
Where as a subject he in private lived.
A wife, a daughter, and three sons were his,
Who form'd a circle of domestic bliss.
The daughter, Tamar, from her aunt was named,
And like her father was for beauty famed,
Whose docile manners with her beauty strove,
To gain attraction; and to kindle love.
But though such comforts he possess'd at home,
Yet his restraint was irksome now become;
For two long years had pass'd their time away,
Gloomy by night, and wearisome by day.
He then resolves his liberty to gain,
And break asunder his coercive chain;
Or in th' attempt, his father's will to know,
And risk th' infliction of a greater woe.
For Joab then he sends, to gain this end,
Who late had acted his adherent friend,
In confidence that he will now once more
Afford his aid full freedom to restore.

A message goes ;—but no return is made ;
And though repeated, no respect is paid.
This grieved the prince ; to force him now he tries,
By hostile means, with this severe device :

He calls his servants, and he bids them go
To Joab's barley in the field below,
A loaded crop, brown for the harvest, near,
And burn the whole e'en to the latest ear.
At this command the fire was soon employ'd,
And all the produce of the field destroy'd.

When this destruction came to Joab's ear
It made him quick before his prince appear,
To whom he goes abruptly to enquire,
Why they so rudely set his field on fire.
The prince returned : " Well!—now thou com'st
in haste

When thus thy produce is reduced to waste ;
But not before, when call'd and call'd again,
For every summons was but sent in vain,
Though well apprized I wanted thee to go
To speak the king, his further mind to know ;
For I am weary thus my time to spend,
Cramp'd in my freedom, and to know no end.
Then be it now thy care to speed away,
My suffering case before the king to lay,
To tell him how in weary bonds I stand,
Who greater freedom found in Geshur's land ;
A land I left in buoyant hope to gain
My rights with others on my native plain.
For why thus shackled, when I sure should be
At least like subjects—like a subject, free !
Nay, rather ask that I may see his face,
And if full pardon'd meet a kind embrace :

Or if, reverse, I should deserve to die,
I may stand ready, and with death comply."

As Joab found it was unsafe to stand
Against this powerful and determined hand,
No compliments the haughty chieftain pays,
But his command obsequiously obeys,
Lest worse correction may be next employ'd
Than this, the treasures of his field destroy'd ;
For though in states well-poised the people know
A just protection by an equal law,
Where e'en a prince, though he a sceptre wield,
Must to the rights of his dependents yield ;
Yet here, alas, too oft reverse we find ;
The will is law, and justice lags behind ;
The great—the wealthy—what they wish fulfil,
And those below them must abide the ill.
Then let us prize it, we who better know
Of upright judgment, and impartial law,
Where justice doth by prompt decision strike,
And makes the powerful and the weak alike.
Joab successful proved ;—the king was won
To grant full pardon, and to see his son :
The son rejoiced, and soon with starting tears
Before his father at the court appears.
When met, he made a suppliant bow profound,
So low descending as to touch the ground ;
When David raised him from his humble place,
And seal'd his pardon with a kind embrace,

Whilst beaming pleasure sparkled in each eye,
And spoke the language of a mutual joy.

Thus reconciled—ah, might it long remain!
And years of comfort be restored again.
But Oh! how restless is the human will,
Let loose to roam, and all its lusts fulfil;
We here, alas! in this example find
What woes succeed licentiousness of mind.
Restored; now Absalom perverts the use
Of his choice blessing by a foul abuse;
E'en where he should all gratitude have paid,
He heap'd afflictions on a parent's head,
And brought upon himself, in guilty strife,
Loss of a kingdom, and the loss of life.

He had not long been thus completely freed,
Before he plann'd a most atrocious deed.
Unnatural act! a rebel son to prove
Against a father who deserved his love;
One who so lately from a generous heart
Had nobly acted the parental part,
And one who seldom what was ask'd denied,
But tow'rd's his children show'd his weakest side.

Ah! David, thou hast often faced thy foes,
And stood undaunted in the sacred cause;
But one now rose, an offspring, worse than all,
Than Gathian, Syrian, or the house of Saul.

Heart-rending thought! that thy own son should
rise,

Thy state to envy, and thy fall devise;
Who, on the wings of wild ambition borne,
Wish'd to depose thee, and possess thy throne.
Severe chastisement! and made deeper too
By this conviction that the lash was due,
That those predictions given, nor given to fail,
Though unaccomplish'd, now thy house assail,
And for thy crimes that thou must feel the rod,
Of an offended, though long-suffering God.

Now Absalom let loose, with secret guile
Enjoys his freedom in a pompous style;—
A princely house he keeps—the table-store
Is rich in dainties—and he feeds the poor.
A train of horses form his noble stud,
The best selected for their speed and blood:
A change of chariots, varied, rich, and new,
Whirl him along, exciting public view;
While fifty footmen, fleetest of the land,
Run on before, and honour'd state command.
Though wont his time in higher life to spend,
Yet for his purpose he could low descend,
T' impress more strongly on the public mind,
How they in him the friendly prince would find:
Hence in the mornings, for the city gate
He changed his bed of down, and waiting sat,
Accosted each who came, their case to know,
What was their suit, and what their want in law;

What city from ? their state of health, and fare ?
With all the tokens of pathetic care.
And as a pledge of their succeeding bliss,
He sometimes seal'd it with a fawning kiss ;
Adding this caution oft, " Be sure to see
Thy cause well order'd, or alas for thee !
For now the king has none well-skill'd to sit
In seat of judgment, for decisions fit.
Sad are the times ! and for the people hard,
To be so foil'd, and from their rights debarr'd,
Ah might it not be so !—might I but stand
In power and station to adjust the land,
That all in need might only come to me,
And I would justice for all parties see,
Right all their wrongs, relieve the man opprest,
And see the sufferings of the realm redrest."

By arts like these, on shallow minds he gain'd,
And in the breasts of thoughtless thousands
reign'd ;

For when the tide of popular applause
Turns to one point, straightway the current
flows:

The mass at objects rush with little thought,
Their reason by excited feeling caught.
So proved it here ;—vain shadows they pursue,
And feel it deeply when too late to rue.

Now to the king goes Absalom in art,
With the pretensions of a zealous heart ;

"Be pleased," says he, "to let thy servant go
And pay in Hebron a religious vow ;
For while in Syria I at Geshur staid
A solemn vow before the Lord I made,
That if He would restore me to my home,
As now I see the happy moment come,
Him would I serve, and He should ever be
My God of worship, to my house and me."

The king discovered not his real intent,
Though what had past might threaten the event ;
And doubtless pleased in his dear son to find
Such dedication to possess his mind,
Says in return : "Keep steadfast to thy word ;
Go—and perform it faithful to thy Lord."

Dismiss'd in favour, to his home he goes,
And courts the comforts of a night's repose,
To soothe his conscience—all its checks allay,
And fit for toils in the succeeding day ;
But agitations fill his anxious breast
That drive away anticipated rest,
While floating visions rack his loaded brain,
And for sweet slumbers give a night of pain.
At last the morning came, and with its ray
Brought on the horrors of succeeding day ;
Nor warning dreams nor ruminating thought
The headstrong passions to their reason brought,
For now his agents are dispatch'd away
On preparations for th' important day,

To give the watch-word to the land around
To stand attentive to the trumpet's sound ;
That when they hear it blown, they may as one
Rise up to hail him on his father's throne.

To Hebron now the prince withdraws away
Two thousand men at early blush of day,
Who ignorant and innocent proceed,
Unconscious of the dark impending deed.

The sacrifice was order'd :—they prepare
For sacred duties with all formal care,
And link religious rites within the train
Of horrid plots the vilest ends to gain.
Meanwhile the scheming prince sent forth a
page
In haste to Giloh to invite a sage,
The wise Ahithophel, who oft had been
His father's aid in many a trying scene ;
Whose high renown he thought would awe command,
And help his cause in the divided land ;
For with the people all he said was right,
His tongue their wisdom, and his eye their sight.

Now strong the faction grew, adherents rose,
To basely forward the usurper's cause,
Joining the son against his injured sire,
And madly blowing the rebellious fire.

Brought to this point, the secret now is gone ;
And some who tremble for th' endanger'd throne,
To David bear this sudden burst of woe,
And tell at once how plotting matters go ;
How the whole land seem rising, e'en as one,
His son to crown, and place him on the throne.

The king, confounded at the direful news,
The dreadful case in all its horror views :
The wound struck deep, and touch'd a tender
part,
The finest feelings of a father's heart.
Sore lamentation, and o'erwhelming fear,
His senses seize, and verge him on despair.
Against his son 'twas hard to urge the strife,
And risk in furious war his precious life ;
And yet supineness might within an hour
Prostrate his all beneath the rebel-power !
What now must David do ? where is the way
When thus 'tis ruin at his home to stay,
And more at large to know not one to serve
But whose allegiance may be prone to swerve ?
At last in haste, in such domestic fright,
He deems it safest to depend on flight ;
For though unusual from his foes to run,
Yet things are changed—'tis only from his son.
Concluding so, in floods of streaming tears,
He thus expresses his oppressive fears :
“ Hard is my lot, of which you bear a part,
And deeply wounding to a parent's heart,

But it is portion'd me through life to know
My cup deep-tinctured, and brim-full of woe ;
And with all fortitude, though thus severe,
I must my measure of affliction bear :
But war we must forego, its honours shun,
When thus between a father and a son.
Then let us flee—self-preservation calls
To leave for safety these devoted walls,
For if we stay and our weak means employ
They may the city and the court destroy.”

This said, in general grief and equal fear,
All his domestics thus assent declare :
“ As equal dangers bode beneath this dome,
So let us share it in the risks to come ;
Then as thou will'st, so we as one accord,
And all stand ready to attend our lord.”

United thus, to quit the place they rise,
To seek their lot beneath the open skies,
But leave ten concubines, whom less they mind,
To be the guardians of the stuff behind.

What strange reverse !—how great !—how
short between
A house of comfort, and this trying scene ;
From all the splendours which at court are known,
To range the world with not a cot their own !
From an imperial height in one short hour,
To cringe beneath the crowd, and dread its power ;

E'en from that crowd with eager haste to fly,
Whose adulations lately rent the sky.
But such the state of man ;—how weak—how
 strange,
How light, unstable, and how prone to change !

Thus David and his house depart and mourn,
Uncertain when, if ever, to return :
And with them go six hundred men who stand
His staunch adherents from a foreign land,
Who through attachment had at venture come,
And near his palace made their choice of home,
Where they most firmly stood the dangerous
 ground
When e'en his subjects proved untrue around.
Amongst this number David noted one,
The firm Ittai, then but lately gone,
Whom he addresses thus, with thoughtful care :
“ And why com'st thou in these my griefs to
 share ?
Thou art a stranger, and an exile too,
And feel'st enough without another's woe.
Why then should I, when forced to wander far,
Take thee to join, and run the risk of war ?
Turn then again, and let thy brethren share
With thee a safer and a better fare,
Leaving these hardships to my house and me ;
And peace and mercy go along with thee.
Go then, and take the city's grateful ease,
To dwell in quiet and repose in peace.”

With feeling heart the Gittite lent an ear;
 While separation seem'd too hard to bear;
 Hence to the king, whom he beheld distress'd,
 He nobly thus his sympathy express'd :
 "As lives the Lord, and as now lives the king,
 I cannot stoop to such a dastard thing;
 For where thou art, there shall thy servant be
 And life or death—the same shall come to me."

The king thus finding his attachment strong,
 He urg'd no more, but took the whole along,
 Returning thanks in tribute to his friend,
 Who thus resolv'd a toilsome time to spend,
 Instead of ease, and on return to share
 The rights of monarchs, and a sumptuous fare.

To the Brook Kidron move the mournful train,
 And point their wanderings to the desert plain,
 With whom Priest Zadok and the Levites are,
 Who through the stream the ark in safety bear;
 And when the brook is past, till all are o'er
 They rest the treasure on the sandy shore,
 When thus the king: "Zadok! thy love and
 care

Have brought thee kindly to attend thus far;
 Yet here thy foot be staid; no further go,
 To join our wanderings and partake of woe;
 But to the city bear the ark again,
 There in its place in safety to remain;

For if the Lord shall favour with his love,
He will these barriers far away remove,
Bring me once more to where the ark shall be,
And lengthen blessings on my house and me ;
But if reversed, his love shall be withdrawn,
'Tis then no matter where I live to mourn.
Hence let his will, which is the best, be done,
My cause to favour—or to raise my son."

This said, he added ; " Art thou not a seer ?
Go then—confide—and cast away thy fear—
Thyself, Abiathar, and each a son ;
And let the purpose of the Lord be done :
While I, meantime, dwell in the desert plain,
And you apprise me how things go again."
Thus, as requested, and to serve their king,
The holy treasure to the town they bring ;
But though apart, they still a portion know
Of David's sorrows, and how matters go,
For bound so close, though now return'd, they
find
Their thoughts still anxious for their friends behind.

These gone ; the king ascended up a mount,
With aspect sad, and tears a briny fount.
Barefoot he trod, while many such he led,
Earth on their hair, and each a cover'd head ;
Strong emblems these that outwardly impart
What dwells within, and racks the heavy heart.

As thus they went a mournful train along,
Report reach'd David by some active tongue,
That wise Ahithophel, his friend so late,
First in the council of the rebels sat ;
On which he breath'd this supplicating prayer :
“ Be pleased, O Lord, to grant thy gracious care,
And turn the counsel of the faithless sage
To foolish reasoning ; and divert his rage.”
Now the wide top of Olivet obtain'd,
The king no more his humbled heart restrain'd ;
But paid that worship ever due to God,
Whether He blesses, or He shakes the rod,
Adored his goodness through each cross event,
And kiss'd the hand whatever woe it sent.

These rites performed ;—behold, a man in
haste

Runs quick to meet them o'er the mountain-waste,
Earth on his head, and all his garments rent,
A striking token of some sad event :
'Tis only Hushai, who in friendly care
Comes thus expressive in their griefs to share ;
But no fresh news he has in charge to bring ;
'Tis sole condolence with the suffering king
Sweet consolation ! from a well-known-friend,
Ready to cheer, or in extremes defend :
But David thinks he shall not reap the most
Of his kind aid within his flying host :
Hence, after thanks return'd for all his care
In deeds oft witness'd or in peace or war,

He thus requests : " Then let me crave thy aid,
Where most availing—nor be time delay'd ;
For in the city thy true province lies
To counteract when ill advice may rise.
Go then and join their councils as they sit,
And for the present to their views submit ;
Hail Absalom their king ; and taking part,
Appear to join them with thy tongue and heart ;
And to their cause a close adherence feign,
That thy advice may ready access gain,
And e'en Ahithophel (of art possest)
Of his strong influence weaken or divest ;
That all their counsels we may thus annoy,
Warp every scheme, and all their plots destroy.
There, ready to assist, is Zadok gone
Abiathar to join, and each a son :
With these two priests consult, and what you see
May be important to convey to me,
Give to their sons, who will without delay
The needful tidings to my camp convey."

This said, they part ; when Hushai promptly
goes

By twisting art to mix among their foes,
Or right or wrong, at trifles not to strain,
If they can only what they wish obtain.
Thus they project ;—but 'tis deserving blame
And stands a tarnish on their brighter fame ;
An act unworthy any nation's head,
That should the people in uprightness lead,

Unworthy one whose deeds have mostly shown
A heart and head to dignify a crown.
Good may from evil spring by higher doom,
Yet 'tis not right to err that good may come ;
Then let not such low craftiness convey
To us a sanction in the present day,
But rather let more noble thoughts arise,
To stand aloof, and sordid arts despise,
That thus correct in scrutinizing sight,
Our private deeds may bear the public light.
Be then upright e'en when with straits opprest ;
Then to o'er-ruling wisdom leave the rest.

Hushai thus gone :—now David push'd away,
His case too urgent to admit delay ;
But far he had not gone in anxious plight
Before he meets an unexpected sight.
Behold 'tis Ziba ! with a saddled pair
Of asses loaded with a cumbrous care,
On which a hundred summer fruits are laid,
Two hundred loaves of choicest wheaten bread ;
One hundred branches of the raisin bine,
And a full bottle of the briskest wine.

The king surprised, in hasty speech began
To briefly thus interrogate the man :
“ Ziba ! what mean'st thou by these things I
see ;
The burden'd asses, and these stores with thee ? ”

Quick he returns : " The asses I intend
For thine own service, and to treat a friend ;
The bread for famish'd men, in need, to eat ;
The fruit to relish as a grateful treat ;
And cheering wine for those o'er whom prevail
Oppressive heats, and who are like to fail."

Generous and thoughtful act, if here we rest ;
But is this all that actuates thy breast ?
Ah no ;—false man, unfaithful to thy trust !
All these pretences are as light as dust ;
For here thou com'st to fawn without dismay,
To basely flatter, and thy king betray.

Supplies were grateful, and of present use,
Though the dark medium of a foul abuse ;
Which David took—then thoughtfully express'd :
" But where does now thy feeble master rest ?
For though I'm thus to toils and sorrow
brought,
Mephibosheth arrests my frequent thought."

Ziba returns : "'Tis not his wish to come,
But stay behind for better work at home ;
" For Israel this day," with joy said he,
" My father's crown will now restore to me."

At this the king now acts a hasty part,
And makes the guiltless for the guilty smart.

Too credulous, and roused, he rashly said :
" But this shall fall on his aspiring head !
For all he holds, or lands or flocks they be,
This day he forfeits ;—these I give to thee."
Incautious act ! one side alone to hear,
And judge from thence that evidence was
clear.

In this, ere long, we shall correctly see
How weak at times the wisest man may be.

His end thus gain'd, this sycophant repays
Th' unwary king with adulating praise,
Bows in obsequence—thanks—and begs to find
His grace in future in the monarch's mind ;
Which need required, for sure the time should
come
When better knowledge would reverse the doom.

This interview thus past—forth David goes,
And for more sufferings meets abundant cause ;
For now is turn'd, he finds, th' unstable tide ;
' Those who had flattered, now in scorn deride ;
And here one fiercer than the rest arose
To speak more boldly, and his mind disclose ;
One Shimei came forth in cursing mood,
To wreak his vengeance, though he sheds no
blood.

No soft rebuke his passions could assuage,
And thus he vented his madd'ning rage :

"Come out, thou bloody man, old Jesse's son,
Thou who through cunning hast usurp'd a throne,
By lawless deeds hast caused the great to fall,
And occupied the sacred rights of Saul.
Thou man of Belial!—though well versed in
wars,

Almighty purpose thy career debars,
And brought the blood thou wantonly hast spilt
To rise against thee, and condemn thy guilt ;
Has cut thee short—brought thy ambition
down,

E'en to the forfeit of thy tarnish'd crown ;
And now at last has given thine eyes to see
Thy son supplant, and rule instead of thee."

Thus vollied he his contumelious fire,
While a flush'd face betray'd his innate ire ;
And as he went, to show his full disgust,
Stones quick he threw, and heaved up clouds of
dust.

Hard to be borne in single-handed strife,
Against such numbers bred in martial life.
Quick Abishai spurn'd ;—then forth he broke,
And thus enraged, to his meek master spoke :
"Why should yon vile-tongued man be let
alone,

To curse th' anointed of the sacred throne ?
Let me, my Lord, but strike a single blow,
And I will send him to his place below."

But David here, with punishment at hand,
Shows o'er his passions a supreme command ;
"Nay, let him curse," said he, "and let him
swear ;

It may be right, and be my place to bear ;
To bear with patience in this adverse hour,
What may be portion'd by Almighty Power.
Well may his language and his conduct be
So rude, imperious, and so harsh to me,
When mine own son still further goes in strife,
As to dethrone me, and to seek my life.
Then let him rage ; so be the will of God,
Thus to chastise, and let me feel the rod ;
For if, submissive, I but bend and bear,
Unbounded mercy may suspend and spare,
And in due time be kindly pleased to say,
"It is enough," and take my griefs away.
Then let me suffer till the time be run,
And say, O Father, let thy will be done !

Thus to his friends the humbled monarch
said,
And all retort, in any measure, stay'd.
The man was suffer'd still to go along,
And use the language of a railing tongue ;
Till wearied out with such a fruitless deed,
He back return'd, and left them to proceed.
So at this day 'tis mostly safest done
To leave contenders to contend alone.

When no fresh fuel feeds th' intemp'rate fire,
It oft subsides, and e'en the sparks expire ;
But if much noticed, in whatever way,
Snares as in ambush, and unseen, may lay ;
The mind at last may catch some little heat,
Become a party, and its peace defeat ;
May take and give, too far in contest run,
And leave things worse than when they first
begun.

END OF BOOK THE NINTH.



D A V I D.

Book the Tenth.

ARGUMENT.

Absalom holds a great council at Jerusalem, after his father has deserted it.—Ahithophel gives base advice, which is united with by Absalom.—In second deliberations his counsel is overthrown by Hushai.—He, in pride and vexation at such a defeat, leaves the company in disgust, and hangs himself.—David is advised of particulars, and removes further for safety.—He crosses the river Jordan; arrives at Mahanaim, and is kindly received and relieved by Barzillai, &c.—Absalom follows close up, and David is obliged to prepare for battle.—It is fought; David's party succeed; Absalom is caught in the branch of a tree, and there slain by Joab.—David, informed of the singular death of his son, grieves for him in an affecting lamentation.—He is aroused by Joab's bold reprimand, and at last welcomes the troops, but with hidden grief.—The tide turns now in David's favour, and he becomes more popular.—Cursing Shimei comes to David to beg pardon; and cringing Ziba to ingratiate himself against his day of reckoning.—The first is pardoned; and the latter is too successful in his selfish and wicked views.—Jordan is repassed towards home.

DAVID.

Book the Tenth.

Now Salem calls within its brazen bar,
To notice there th' insidious plots of war,
To view a conclave in its full debate
On plans of treason to o'erturn the state.

From Hebron come, the prince and rebel-
crew

Men of first talents to their council drew ;
With whom Ahithophel, of noted fame,
Great in his views, and high in honour, came ;
Not last advanced, nor least his zeal to bring,
Hushai rush'd in to hail the prince, a King ;
But Absalom received with cautious ear
His seeming friendship, and his loyal cheer,

Well knowing him to be his father's friend,
To aid in council, or in war defend ;
Then thus the prince ironically said :
“ Is this the shrine at which thy love is paid ?
Where is thy kindness to thy royal friend,
Whom in his perils thou shouldst close attend ?
Support through all, most faithfully to bear
In all his toils, and all his griefs, a share ?”

Hushai brook'd this with an unruffled face,
Nor glow'd a blush to tell he felt disgrace,
But in return he tried his point to gain,
Without retorting, in this gentle strain :
“ Nay, whom the Lord, and whom the people
choose,
Whom Israel favour, or whom they refuse,
Shall my desires to every wish fulfil,
And their election shall secure my will.
Then where in right should any service be ?
Thy father's once ;—but now it turns to thee :
Then may that service meet acceptance gain,
To aid his cause whose right it is to reign,
One whose deserts and princely deeds command
The general love and suffrage of the land.”

At such unsettled times 'tis hard to know
Who stands a friend, or who becomes a foe ;
For fickle minds will vary like the wind,
This day be friendly and the next unkind ;

This day attached and well disposed may
seem,

The next be turn'd, and go with tide and stream :
Hence now the prince supposed him such an one,
And with the swimming crowd securely gone.

He deem'd it so ;—and as the present day
Was too momentous to admit delay,
In haste he thus Abithophel address'd,
And with that sage included all the rest :
“ Thon know'st my case, and glad I would receive
The wisest counsel that my friends can give ;
Then in your wisdom please to point the way
For our success in this important day.”

When, with grave face, Ahithophel arose,
As some strong pillar in a better cause ;
Yet though their chief, a foolish speech began,
To plunge still deeper the deluded man ;
And basely thus advised : “ Go first, this day,
And with thy father's women freely play,
Deem'd as thine own, as an adopted right
Before all Israel in the open light.

Possession gain'd, consider not as small ;
If rightly follow'd, it will lead to all ;
For when 'tis known, it will to Israel shew
How thou wilt stand abhorr'd in David's view ;
And thus disjoin'd with such a right obtain'd,
It will be deem'd a vast accession gain'd,
Promoting all in heart and hand, as one,
To fix thee firmly on th' imperial throne.”

Abithophel here closed, when down he sat
With all-importance, as their helm of state,
When prompt to his advice, with pliant care
The servile menials all the work prepare ;
Up to the palace-roof, made flat of lead,
A tent they bear, and for his purpose spread,
Where in broad day, (although unfit for night,)
He meets the females in the public sight !

Such the base deed !—yet matters end not
here ;

The prince again must on the stage appear,
To whom Abithophel now further says :
“ Know then thy case, for dangers ’tend delays ;
We must proceed ;—but only let me choose
Twelve thousand valiants, fit for such a use,
And I this night, before another day,
Will David and his medley host betray,
Whose weak and weary force, surprised, will fly,
And he, deserted, shall be left to die ;
When the rest pardon’d shall return with me,
In sure allegiance, bound alone to thee.”

Though cruel this advice, to urge such strife
As prompts a son against a father’s life,
Yet so depraved the callous son appears,
He neither father nor his rank reveres,
But well approves ; in which the factious part
Of city-elders join in hand and heart.

Yet ere he moves, he makes a short delay,
To hear what Hushai, after all, can say ;
To whom the prince : " Such counsel I receive,
But what wouldst thou in thy best wisdom give ? "

He paused awhile, as if deep-fetch'd and far,
But studious only to protract the war,
Then gravely said : " What thou hast heard
may be

Much wiser counsel than can come from me ;
Yet I'm aware, if you that plan pursue,
It will not reach what we so warmly view ;
For well we know that none in war can boast
Such mighty men as are thy sire and host ;
And at this time their minds are chafed and
strong,

As the fierce bear when raving for her young.
Thy father too in war has long been skill'd,
And all precautions in the hostile field,
Then at this time, himself secure to save,
Immured is, doubtless, in some rocky cave ;
And if thy men, full-flush'd, and keen of mind,
Some little check in their advance should find,
The news would fly, and gather as it went,
To swell the trifle to some great event,
That to thy valiants would dismay impart,
Though boasting courage with a lion's heart ;
For every one from lisping youth to age
Knows what it is to meet thy father's rage,

Whose great achievements o'er the nations hurl'd
Have struck with wonder an astonish'd world :
Then any foil would bring his fame to mind,
And make them fly to leave his wrath behind.
Then as no few his prowess should engage
To meet the vengeance of his fiery rage,
'Tis my advice that thou shouldst give command
To gather forces over all the land,
From even Dan to Beer-sheba, afar
The chief for valour, and the first in war ;
Such countless numbers as ne'er met before,
E'en as the sands upon the briny shore,
With whom, as head, join thy resplendent car,
To ride, all-cheering, 'midst the ranks of war.
For as the dew o'er all the land is spread,
So shall our numbers be, and so our dread ;
That paramount o'er all, we soon shall lay
Their troops in dust, and all opposers slay,
Or e'en should they within some town be gone
Well fenced around with iron, brass, and stone,
Our mighty host would all their deeds annoy,
Dash their last hopes, and every scheme destroy ;
Nay, e'en the city pull with ropes away,
And town and people in the river lay."

Here ceased the artful and designing man,
When approbation loudly crown'd the plan ;
His schemes above Ahithophel they raise,
With joyful clamour and unbounded praise ;

Give him first honours, as superior far
In all the knowledge and the arts of war ;
For so the Lord had fore-determined all
The former counsel should abortive fall,
And that events should in succession tend
To bring this rebel to a signal end.

This proud Ahithophel no more can hear
To brook with patience, and with life to bear,
On which the potent enemy of all
Works up the passions to produce his fall.
“ Can I,” thinks he, “ long used to higher things,
To counsel warriors, ministers, and kings,
To be the people’s tongue, and eye, and ear,
And always greeted with the foremost cheer—
Can I submit to thus degraded be,
To see these honours thus transferr’d from me,
And fix’d on one below—inferior far
To rule in council, or direct in war?
No !—’tis too mean—I go—I quit the place
Of such indignity and low disgrace.
Yes—honour spurn it ! spurn such things unfurl’d,
And sooner quit, than live in such a world !”

Inflated thus, no more he kept his place,
But forward push’d to shun his sad disgrace,
And darkly brooding, left the whole behind,
A rash, false refuge in mistake to find.
His ass then saddling, fearful of delay,
He sullen mounts, and quickly speeds away.

His home he gain'd ; but ah ! no home it made,
For all seem'd clouded with a dismal shade,
Where settling his affairs of outward store,
He bids them all adieu, to meet no more !
Then seeks a lonely place, bereft of hope,
And ends his life by a suspended rope !

Thus closed this man—this man of boasted
fame,
And buried all in weakness, sin, and shame.
The deed thus done, his last remains they place
In the sepulchre of his father's race ;
But void of marble to record his fame,
Or simple stone to tell the world his name.
A mournful exit !—and enough to prove
What he adored, and where he placed his love ;
On thee, O wisdom ! human wisdom's fame,
In life his bane—but now dissolved in shame !
This he let o'er his better sense prevail ;
As some light vessel with a crowd of sail,
The ballast wanting, which can never brave
The foaming surges, and the rolling wave ;
But when the winds with boist'rous currents
sweep,
Will overwhelm and sink beneath the deep.
Not so the bark well-fitted for the gale,
With solid ballast, and an equal sail ;
For this can either take the gentle breeze,
Or bound o'er billows of tumultuous seas,

And still its balance on the surface keep
Amidst the fury of the stormy deep.

Such is the state of man ;—such is the strife
To toss and float him on this sea of life,
But well for those who wisely seek, and find,
Substantial succour to support the mind,
Who do not on delusive favours live,
Nor sink when crosses their reverses give ;
Who do not deem, when pleasing views are
cross'd,
That life is worthless, and that all is lost,
But rank things here as of inferior rate,
That can assail us in this transient state,
With equanimity in all, to bear,
Below elation, and above despair ;
Looking beyond to an auspicious day
When tears and sorrows shall be past away,
And they shall reap, in lieu of trials here,
Transcendent glories in another sphere !

O ! hadst thou placed, Ahithophel, thy love,
And thy dependence on thy God above ;
Made heaven thy hope, and held this world aright,
Thou might'st have seen things in a clearer light,
Seen this small check, this empty-sounding loss,
A non-essential and a trivial cross ;
Known an all-gracious Providence thy friend,
And made a timely and a happy end.

Self-preservation is prime nature's law—
Instinctive gift—and which all creatures know,
From the huge elephant that stalks the plain,
And mighty whale that rolls amidst the main,
Down to the midge that dances in the beam,
And little minnow in the limpid stream :
E'en the dull worm, that feels th' approaching
tread,

Darts to its hole, and plunging hides its head.
Then darest thou, man, to take at thy command,
A life that's given by an Almighty hand,
Who above instinct has the mind endow'd,
The gift of reason for thy use bestow'd,
And over all, sense of religion given,
To guide through life, and lead at last to heaven ;
Blessings that should our grateful thanks employ,
And we possess them with dependent joy ;
And though at times close trials may arise,
To curb the passions, and to make us wise,
Yet there is nothing in this world below
Can come to man of such excessive woe,
As warrants him to use the murd'rous knife,
Or fatal cord, to take away his life.

'Tis the Lord's right alone to grant our stay,
Or when, or how, to take that life away ;
Then shrink at thoughts that vent'rous would
translate

The soul to judgment in another state,
To face its dire tribunal, there to be
Portion'd for ever by a last decree :

For such as these, who cut the mortal thread,
May hope relinquish, and the sentence dread !

From such dark things now back again we go,
To trace the other—still a tale of woe !
From council now withdrawn, sly Hushai goes,
Quick to the priests his tidings to disclose.
To Zadok he relates how matters went ;
What each advised—but queries the event.
Hence they judge best no longer time to stay,
But quick dispatch the urgent news away,
And David caution, in his present state,
No longer there at such a risk to wait,
But leave the desert plains, and speed away
Before the dawning of another day ;
Lest some new turn the fickle prince should bring
His plan to alter, and pursue the king,
By which that night, should they so near remain,
He might o'erwhelm them, and his purpose gain.

On the next step in sentiment agreed,
A girl is call'd, of well-accustomed speed,
To bear a message to the youths who wait
Without the confines of the city gate,
Where station'd they abode both night and day,
Ready to bear all needful news away.

The message thus obtain'd, they now proceed
To reach the camp with energy and speed ;

But though so private, yet they meet annoy
From the observance of a busy boy,
Who lurking as a spy, unseen survey'd
The rapid movements of the nimble maid,
And told the prince, who, all alert in care,
Pursuit commanded, and no speed to spare. 1

Thus closely follow'd, hard the task they
found,
To keep the road, and still maintain their ground,
But to Bahurim come, awhile they lay,
And in a covert undetected stay ;
For there a well they secretly descend,
And in a matron find a faithful friend,
Who now to hide them, with assiduous hand,
Effects a scheme by good contrivance plann'd.
Across the well she casts some spreading boughs,
Then a strong canvass o'er the branches throws,
On which she lays, with panting hurry borne,
As if to dry, some unsecured corn.
Thus all made safe, up their pursuers run,
And ask abruptly, where the youths are gone ?
The artful woman speaks in quick reply,
And thus, in answer, tells a specious lie :
“ Far are they gone ;—long since they pass'd
the brook,
And yonder road, like bounding roes, they took.”

This heard ;—in talk they made no more delay,
But forward push'd as on the scent of prey ;

Yet unsuccessful, and now wearied out,
They turn'd at last, and left the vain pursuit.

The coast thus clear'd, the youths alert to start,
Thank their protectress, and away depart.
No more opposed, they soon securely bring
Th' unwelcome tidings to the anxious king,
Who, quickly seeing dangers in delays,
Sighs, weeps, and mourns, but quick the charge
obeys,
Up rises with his force, and speeds away
To make the most before the closing day,
That ere the star of night withdrew its beam,
The whole had forded Jordan's flowing stream.

Now blushing morn drove on the shades of
night,
And gave the wanderers its auspicious light,
Who still proceed beneath the grateful ray,
Yet quiet comes not with the coming day ;
But on they pass with heavy hearts, and fears,
With sighs responsive, and with floods of tears.

Now Mahanaim reach'd, they there received
The stranger's welcome, and were well relieved,
For here three princely men, who knew their
state,
Feel a deep interest, and with presents wait,
Their wants supply, for much was in their power,
And much they handed in that needful hour :

Soft beds they brought, their weary limbs to rest,
Utensils various—food already drest ;
Sheep, butter, honey, barley, wheat, and cheese,
To serve each need, and every taste to please ;
“ For now,” said they, “ these banish’d wanderers
come

Deprived of all that they enjoy’d at home,
Where in the wilderness they have sustain’d
Corroding want, and been with sorrows pain’d ;
Then well if they with us some ease can find
From outward sufferings, and a troubled mind.”

Welcome supplies, which generously impart
Well-timed relief to many an aching heart.
David enjoy’d the hospitable boon,
Though all was damp’d with pondering what
would come :

Awhile it cheer’d him—then—and yet again
His heart recoil’d, and felt its former pain.
It will not do, though here with comforts blest,
To cast his care, and take his settled rest ;
For dreadful dangers follow up his rear,
And may in progress now be very near.
Need calls for vigilance to be awake,
And all provision for the future make,
With boding ills to cope that may befall,
And be prepared to meet the worst of all.
Now he arouses to reluctant care,
Force to arrange, and for a war prepare.

Direful the prospect!—shocking to all sense!
Son against father!—father in defence!
Nearest of blood—and if they meet at all,
The son or father, or e'en both, may fall!

To count his numbers, with reluctant care,
David proceeds, and thus prepares for war;
In proper classes rank'd his warriors stand,
Prompt to their king, and ready for command:
Each thousand and each hundred have their head,
To give directions, and to take the lead;
But over all to three he gives the sway;
Three grand divisions each their chief obey:
Joab stands first, of fierce, unfeeling heart;
Next Abishai with an equal part;
And to Ittai falls another third,
Who, though a stranger, justly is preferr'd,
For steady friendship moved his generous heart
In all their conflicts to partake a part.

Thus matters pass'd with David, while we find
His son was following with a force behind,
A countless band, like swarming locusts, grown,
Flush'd with wild views of conquest and a
crown;
But left by Joab, (who in many a war
Had carried conquest with triumphant car,)
Amasa stands deputed in his stead,
A warrior too, but not so fierce to lead.

This chieftain now in high and mighty post
Directs along the overspreading host,
Who plunge and cross the widely-flowing flood
Of Jordan's waters on the road to blood,
Then in the land of Gibeah make their stand,
The bulk of Israel at the chief's command.

Meantime the king, apprized how matters went,
Prepares his posture for the great event,
For now, alas ! the awful time is come
When son and father must await their doom ;
Uncertain where the fatal stroke may fall,
Whom death may spare, or whom abruptly call.
Though hard to nature, yet imperious need
Impels the monarch to th' unnatural deed,
For self-defence, himself and all to save
From sweeping fury and a general grave.

His forces now arranged, are roused to arms,
And a loved monarch every bosom warms.
The king proposes first of chiefs to stand,
To take upon him the supreme command ;
But they oppose his post in such a strife
To risk his ruin, and his precious life,
And urge it thus : " With us thou shalt not go
To face the fury of so bent a foe ;
For thou'rt their aim, and if known there to be,
Their art and vengeance will be hurl'd on thee ;
And if successful, it will prove a gain
Above ten thousand of thy subjects slain ;

Nay, when compared, it would be deem'd but
small,
Should even half of all our numbers fall :
Then let it only be thy royal care
To see us safely off, and grant thy prayer."

To be relieved from such an active part,
Came grateful to the father's feeling heart,
For though an hero of the boldest blood,
Yet this came close ; and over-awed he stood,
As such a strait in war he never bore,
For such a war he never knew before ;
Hence to their will he stood not long opposed,
But thus submissive with their wishes closed :
"It was my first intent to take the field ;
But what you deem the best—to you I yield."

Thus all agreed—now David pensive sat,
And gave his blessing as they past the gate,
As they by thousands, graced with spear and
shield,
And pendent quivers, issued to the field ;
When as the chiefs in their succession came,
He thus address'd them in a father's name :
"Success be yours, as you the force command,
To quell disturbance, and restore the land ;
But let it also be your studious care
In your chastisement Absalom to spare :
Make him by proper means his crimes to see,
But mix your mercy, and remember me.

Thus charged—they take the wide-extended
wood,

And soon, alas ! begins the work of blood ;
The armies meet in forces wide and far,
And through the forest rings the din of war,
The arrows fly like showers of battering hail
And with deep wounds th' opposing troops assail,
While death triumphant o'er the slaughter reigns,
And thousands to his gloomy empire gains.
Though sharp, yet short, was this conflicting field,
For faithless Israel was compell'd to yield,
As they are doom'd more dire effects to feel
From thorns and briars, than the edge of steel,
For more than weapons these in silent way
Annoy the rebels, and their numbers slay,
In which soon falls their lofty guiding star,
The traitor son, at head of all the war,
Where retribution all at once succeeds
To end and punish his atrocious deeds;
Not falling as a prince in high command,
The prompt defender of his native land,
And by the honour'd sword, (so understood,)
But by th' entangling of the simple wood ;
For so just heaven saw meet to take his life,
And by this signal means to end the strife,
In forfeit for his dark and daring crimes,
As an example to succeeding times,
And as a portion of the father's doom,
Which by the prophet was reveal'd to come.

Thus came his end :—amidst the raging strife
He spurr'd his mule to save his pending life ;
Which speeding quick away with rapid stroke,
His head was caught amidst a spreading oak,
When the brisk beast, freed of its burden, past,
And far behind his hanging rider cast,
Hung by that very bush of noted hair,
So late his pride, but now his fatal snare ;
Who thus suspended 'twixt high heaven and
earth,

Was nearly closing his exhausted breath,
When one beheld him so aloft in height,
And ran to Joab in a maze of fright,
Whom thus in haste he speaks : “ What have I
seen !

E'en Absalom, high heaven and earth between,
Hung by his head of hair, and gasping breath,
In writhing anguish, and at point of death.”
To whom the chief : “ What ! see this man of
strife,

And not deprive him of the dregs of life ?
Hadst thou but raised thy hand and sent a dart
To end the quiverings of his trait'rous heart,
High would have been the honours due to thee,
And great the favours from the realm and me ;
I should have granted, and with joy decreed,
Ten silver shekels for so good a deed,
And added too, a hero's due and pride,
An honour'd girdle to adorn thy side.”

Struck at so bold a speech, th' astonish'd man,
In quick return, an answer thus began ;
“ Nay !—distant far—far ever distant be
So vile a thought, and such a deed from me,
As an assassin, to dispatch a dart,
To wound the son, and break the father's heart.
Nay e'en a thousand shekels should not gain
My hand to such an act, and cause of pain,
For well thou know'st, what tender charge he
gave,
To do our duty, but his son to save ;
Then had I struck, I should have met a frown,
And for life taken should have lost my own :
And well I know, though offering gifts and fame,
Thou wouldst thyself have been the first to
blame.”

This was enough—and if the chieftain's eyes
Had not in view to strike a greater prize,
Perhaps his hand, moved by a savage heart,
Had rais'd his sword or sent a speedy dart,
To lay the man who this so freely said
Amongst the numbers of the recent dead :
But no suspense ;—he only briefly says,
“ I cannot tarry—dangers 'tend delays.”

With this, three darts he snatch'd, and sped
along
To where the sufferer agonizing hung,

And, unaccustom'd mercy to impart,
He thrust them through his still pulsating heart,
Wreaking his vengeance on his helpless frame,
With brutal fury, to a warrior's shame.
Yet not enough to thus behold him bleed,
Tén youths he orders to repeat the deed,
Who at command fulfil the further part
To glut with wounds his dark atrocious heart.
All life extinct ;—amidst the woods they found
A pit deep-sunk, with earth and stones around ;
To which at once the mangled corpse they bear,
And cast it down without a single tear ;
Then o'er the grave they raise a heap of stones,
And crush his royal, but dishonour'd bones.

Such was thy close, such, Absalom, thy end,
Without the comfort of one soothing friend ;
Such the strange monument raised o'er thy frame,
Without a token to record thy name,
Though graced with beauty, and to honours born,
To heir a kingdom, and to fill a throne,
And reap whatever wealth and power command
From sovereign influence o'er a prosperous land.
But ah ! an enemy an entrance found
To blast these blessings, and his kindred wound :
Too soon, alas ! he miss'd true wisdom's way,
Departing early from parental sway ;
And, shunning due restraint in youthful times,
Was led from little slips to greater crimes,

Till wild ambition, that infernal guest,
Became his idol, and his soul possess'd,
That drove him on above his sphere to soar,
To grasp untimely at the sovereign power,
And e'en engage in an unnatural strife
To loss of all—his honours—power—and life!

Ah! may th' example stand upon the page
To youth unborn, and down to every age;
To teach them kindly in the dawn of day,
To plant their footsteps in a better way,
A pupil to become in wisdom's school,
Bound to th' injunction of this sacred rule,
"To honour parents with all reverence due,
That length of days and blessings may ensue."
Thus life begun correct in early days
A sound foundation for the future lays;
But if reversed, too oft in after times
They grow in errors, and confirm in crimes.

These deeds of horror done, the trumpet's sound
Rolls through the woods to stop pursuit around;
And as their chief opponent now is slain,
Peace they restore, and all return again.
Now Zadok's son, impatient for the wing,
To outspeed others, and apprise the king,
Begs his release, as agent sent express,
To tell how Heaven has thus been pleased to bless;
But Joab answers: "No!—thy tongue this day
Shall no such message to the king convey;

For sore it will afflict, to find his son
Is thus abruptly and untimely gone :
Some older shall the fatal news impart,
Who from experience can console the heart :
Cushi, go thou, and with a mind serene,
Gently apprize of what thine eyes have seen."

Cushi bow'd thanks to be the honour'd man,
And big with tidings to the monarch ran ;
But proved too flush'd with what he had to bear
To mind his charge, and meekly greet the ear.

Ahimaaz, yet alert with speed to start
To tell the tale, or share at least a part,
Begg'd once again, but Joab still declined,
And question'd thus : " Why such an anxious
mind,

Since no good news can on the whole appear,
For thee to carry to a father's ear ?"
But further press'd, at last he gave consent,
When by the plain the fleet Himaaz went ;
On Cushi gain'd, and likely then to bring
The first report to advertise the king.

Meantime in great suspense the father waits,
And sits all anxious at the city gates.
Just at this time the watchman on the walls
Beholds some come, and to the monarch calls ;
Who in return says : " If he come alone,
He brings dispatches how events have gone."

Quickly the watchman calls aloud again ;
" I see another bounding o'er the plain ;
Methinks the foremost, as I see him run,
In speed and gesture, is like Zadok's son."
" Well—he's a worthy man," rejoin'd the king,
And some good tidings will assuredly bring."

Soon he approach'd ;—in haste his news to tell,
He calls aloud—" I hail thee !—all is well !"
Prostrate he falls, low prone at David's feet,
Thus in addition with his tale to greet :
" Blest be the Lord, thy all-protecting God,
Who in thy favour now has raised his rod ;
And those consumed who took their daring swing
In opposition to my lord and king."
But David quick : " Thy knowledge farther tell,
And let me hear if Absalom be well ?"

The strait was hard, nor could he well defer,
And hence it prompts his flinching mind to err,
For thus he answers : " When our chieftain sent
We knew the victory, but not each event ;
And when I left, a gathering crowd I saw,
But what it meant I could not stay to know."

David in haste : " Then step thyself aside,
And room for Cushi in thy place provide."

Cushi arrives : " Tidings, my lord, the king!
Great news from battle I am charged to bring !

For there the Lord hath wrought in high degree
To quell opposers of thy throne and thee ;
He has cut short their towering hopes of gain,
And thousands are in their rebellion slain."

As thus the messenger with slaughter ceased,
The king's suspicions and his fears increased,
Who quick enjoin'd the cautious man to tell
If through the conflict Absalom were well ?

This strict inquiry left no room for choice,
But forced this answer with reluctant voice :
" May all seceders, who to treason fly,
Be brought at once as that young man to lie."
This was enough ; enough for him to know,
To rouse his feelings, and complete his woe.
Too full to bear, and none to give relief,
He sought an upper room to vent his grief,
When, as by trembling step he gain'd th' ascent,
To ardent feelings thus he gave the vent :
" O Absalom !—my son !—my hapless son !
Cut off for ever—and for ever gone !
Would God that I had all the world denied,
And in the battle as a ransom died,
To save a child that might a blessing be ;
For what is life, when thus bereft of thee ?
Grief is my lot !—alas ! I'm doom'd to know
A cup o'erflowing with unequall'd woe !
O Absalom ! my son ! my suffering son !
For ever lost ! for ever, ever gone !

Thus David mourn'd, and turn'd the signal day
To lamentation, and to sad dismay.
The conquering troops, instead of triumph, found
In such reception a too poignant wound,
And to the city slunk, more like a host
Which had a battle and their honour lost.
This Joab roused, who, careless of offence,
And callous too to sympathetic sense,
Upon the mournful king abruptly broke,
And harshly chiding thus dictating spoke :
“ Know'st thou, O king ! what shame and what
di grace
Thy sorrow spreads o'er every warrior's face ?
Who should a welcome very different know,
To make the cheek with conscious honour glow ;
For great have been the deeds that we can boast
Against a daring and outrageous host ;
E'en at the risk of every life to save
Thee, and all thine, from an untimely grave :
Then gratitude demands thy thanks and praise
For such protection to thy lengthen'd days :
But I perceive, did all the troops this day
Slain on the field before the rebels lay,
Had Absalom but lived, it would have been
A far more welcome and heart-cheering scene ;
For all these murmurings to the people prove,
Friends gain neglect, and enemies thy love ;
That neither chiefs nor troops can now receive
The meed of thanks which is thy due to give.

Rise then !—shake off this grief, and let us see
Thy care for those who thus have cared for thee :
Speak comfort to their minds, and grateful show,
Or I pronounce a sad impending woe ;
For if not done, know then this truth from me,
Not one amongst them will remain with thee ;
And surely this the worst of ills will raise,
That thou hast witness'd from thy infant days !”

This was strong language, but imperious need
Seem'd in some measure to compel the deed ;
In which success was his—for now arose
The supine king as from a bed of woes ;
And seeing, as described, wherein he stood,
He changed his tone, and feign'd a cheering
mood ;

His post resuming where he lately sat
To greet them passing through the city gate.
When known, around the pressing crowds appear,
This grateful notice from the king to hear,
Which comes well-timed, now tending to impart
A quick revival to each drooping heart,
Pleasing at last to find their deeds afford
A meet acceptance with their honour'd lord,
While yet they felt a sympathetic part,
To know the struggle that oppress'd his heart.
Thus mutual feelings seem'd to crown with joy ;
But David's part experienced much alloy :
Urged against choice his soothing art to try,
His speech, at times, betray'd a smother'd sigh ;

For keen reflections oft upon him broke
And all the father in his soul awoke.

The shadowy night, and distant twinkling
star,
Now call'd to peaceful rest from toils of war.
Sleep seals the eyes of thousands with delight,
But David tosses through a restless night ;
For his forced spirits, now when left alone,
Down to the lowest in the deeps return,
Brooding o'er all, fed by the gloom of night,
Till dawn appear'd, the harbinger of light.

Ascendant now became the royal cause,
Which foil'd the compact of the rebel foes.
The chain thus broken, links asunder flew,
When shattered parties different paths pursue ;
And for a while side is opposed to side,
Tribe against tribe the floating land divide,
Distraction reigning from the late defeat,
And much contention, urged with jarring heat.
Some wish'd to try another vent'rous scheme,
To feed a faction, and their loss redeem ;
The major part were wise, and well aware
Of certain loss if they renew'd the war ;
That their weak force, when thus so foil'd and
few,
Could not resume it with one hope in view.
These more discreet, interrogation made,
And for the present their rash measures stay'd :

"Seeing," say they, "that David in our cause
Has always quell'd our most inveterate foes,
Both on our frontiers, and in lands afar,
The dread of nations, and the prince of war ;
That now for Absalom he leaves the land,
Which makes the wheels of government to stand,
While this young prince, whom we advanced to
power,
Is slain in battle to arise no more ;
Why then not haste this Bulwark back to bring,
To reinstate him our protecting king,
Who would again, as he has done before,
In our defence exert his matchless power;
Foil all our enemies, and deck his car
With golden trophies from the spoils of war ;
And having on our foes his fury hurl'd,
Would make our empire mistress of the
world."

This gain'd the rest, who clamour'd now to
bring,
For reinstatement, their degraded king :
Each changed his tongue, each now in rapture
strove
To hail him honour'd, and profess their love.
Thus Israel now the chief pretensions made,
While Judah rather in the rear delay'd ;
But wide the difference ;—Israel far had err'd,
And hence much zeal to reconcile preferr'd.

O fickle man !—how varying as the blast ;
 No future measured by the moments past.
 David is one ;—his merits are the same,
 But only alter'd in success and fate.
 Ought ye not then in heights and depths to
 prove
 Your strict adherence, and unblas'd love ?
 But O how rare !—how few, alas ! we find,
 Who carry friendship with an even mind,
 Who will through all, in wealth, and power,
 and fame,
 And adverse moments, still adhere the same !

David soon heard, to cheer his drooping mind,
 But felt a check, as Judah lagg'd behind ;
 Judah, which in affinity of blood
 Nearer than Israel to the monarch stood ;
 On which he call'd for Zadok's friendly aid,
 Whilst he himself his further steps delay'd,
 To wait to see if he could not obtain
 A general sanction to confirm his reign.
 To Zadok and Abiathar he says :
 " You Judah see in promptitude delays ;
 Go then and speak the elders of the land,
 The first in power, who all the rest command,
 And query why they thus become the last
 To show their kindness after what is past :
 They who should feel the nearest to the throne,
 Flesh of my flesh, my brethren and my bone ;

Yet they let Israel rise, the first to prove
Return'd allegiance, and the pledge of love.
Remind Amasa too, how near allied
We are in kindred ;—query why divide ?
Tell him direct that all his crimes shall be
O'erlook'd and pardon'd if he turn to me ;
And further I will grant that he shall stand
In Joab's place, and take the chief command."

Commission'd thus, the ever-faithful two
With ardent haste the king's request pursue ;
Arouse the sleepy land ; their elders move
To warm the people with awaken'd love ;
Who blow the spark, which late so dim became,
Afresh to kindle, and become a flame,
When with warm zeal the general mass engage
From sanguine youth to hoary-headed age ;
And now a message send in fervent strain,
To call the monarch once again to reign ;
Which proves most grateful, auguring to restore,
By coalition, all enjoy'd before.
Encouraged thus, he once more moved again
Towards the confines of his natal plain,
With whom Barzillai took a friendly part
To aid him forward, and to cheer his heart ;
This faithful friend who, with the two before,
Met him so kindly with a liberal store.

This was true friendship of the noblest kind,
Not like the rabble, varying with the wind,

But firmly steady in the adverse hour,
As in the height and plenitude of power,
Thus manifesting, that in times of need
"The man of friendship is a friend indeed."
Magnanimous love!—how seldom do we find
Such generous feelings in the human mind!
This David knew, for lately it had been
So amply witness'd in that trying scene;
Then bound by strongest ties to do his part,
And show the tokens of a grateful heart,
"Come," then he says, "my venerable friend,
Think not apart our future time to spend;
But go to court, and there reside with me,
Where every comfort shall be render'd thee;
For age has now o'erspread with hoary hairs,
And it is time to leave a world of cares;
Come then, let all the toils of empire cease,
And calmly spend thy latter days in peace."

This invitation in affection spoke,
A grateful feeling in his friend awoke;
Who then, with faltering tongue, and brim-full
eye,
Declined the favour in this meek reply:
"Kind are thy offers;—I accept them so;
My mind is with thee;—yet I must not go;
For why should I, and what to me pertain,
Become a burden, and to none a gain?
This very day I pass my eightieth year,
Nor spent a life without its cares to bear:

Whence I perceive exhausted nature goes,
And must be verging to its final close,
For now no dainties give my taste delight,
And dim suffusion overspreads my sight ;
My limbs forget to move as at my will,
And my whole system as before to feel.
Mine ears grow heavy, which no sounds can
charm,
No voice enliven, nor can music warm ;
My lips grow trem'lous, my complexion pale,
My hands to tremble, and my strength to fail.
Why then indeed should such an one as me,
In a strange country an incumbrance be ?
Dwell in a palace, strangers to annoy,
Partake their favours, and yet none enjoy ?
Much rather let me back return again,
To wear out nature on my native plain,
Succour'd by those who knew my better day,
And be inshrined where all my kindred lay.
Such is my wish, my lord, my honour'd friend ;
Thus my last days to live, and thus to end :
Yet give me leave, and I will see thee o'er,
Safe on the banks of Jordan's farther shore,
When I will grant my son, should'st thou
approve,
To go with thee, and rest my pledge of love ;
And it will Chimham please with thee to
fare,
Whom I will trust to thy paternal care."

Thus spoke the reverend sire, but scarcely
clear,
And as he closed down dropt the silent tear.
The feeling speech a deep impression made,
When in return the king reluctant said :
“ Though hard it seems with one so soon to part
Who, firm in friendship, has felt near at heart ;
Yet thy strong reasons bear a powerful sway,
And make me cautious how I urge thy stay.
With sorrow then I must release my friend,
Soon to return, and calmly wait his end ;
But shall instead his hopeful son receive,
To represent him, and with me to live ;
Whom I shall grant, for his loved parent's sake,
T' enjoy all comforts, and with me partake ;
And will the father, my dear absent friend,
Serve with all service, and in need defend.”

Thus they communed ;—while down from
Judah came
Crowds of all ranks, and loud in David's fame ;
A mighty force, efficacious, bold, and gay,
To aid through Jordan on their watery way ;
Where with the first is Shimei in the throng,
Who briskly leads a thousand men along,
As need he had, and well he knew the need,
To use his art with David to succeed ;
For great had been his risk in recent strife,
E'en for his crime the forfeit of his life,

And these he thought would easier smooth his
way
Than all his lips and varying tongue could say.

And here another comes with zeal alert,
The king to please, and justice to divert ;
Ziba! the false, who push'd with pompous aid,
And high in show his household honours paid :
E'en fifteen sons and twenty servants came,
To join vociferous in the monarch's fame ;
Thus by short means in recompence to pay
For gifts the king had weakly given away,
But where he still in ignorance remain'd
By what vile shift the property was gain'd.
Thus still o'er Ziba hung uncertain doom,
On what was yet, when facts were known, to
come.

But by anticipation art supplied
This scheme for favour, nor was he denied ;
For he at last was suffered to remain
In selfish grasp of his unrighteous gain.

A bustling time ensued ; the medley mass
On to the river's brink officious pass,
All anxious to assist the household train
O'er the broad stream on their return again :
Thousands splash in of the promiscuous crew,
And, like washed sheep, in dripping robes issue ;
All landed safe, they spread around, and far,
As some huge army on the point of war :

But other scenes their music now employ ;
It only echoes to the voice of joy.

Here Shimei, chief in the giddy throng,
Who with the loudest raised the jovial song,
A moment watch'd, in doubt and anxious pain,
When with the king he might an audience gain.
Obtain'd ;—he stept his plaintive tale to tell,
And prone before the frowning monarch fell ;
When soon his tongue the half-made silence
broke,

And in cant-whining thus he cringing spoke :
“ Be pleased, O gracious king! to hear my
prayer,

And let thy goodness this thy servant spare :
Remember not, nor lay that crime to heart,
Wherein I acted a disloyal part ;
For well I know a grievous sin is mine,
But to forgive it be the virtue thine.
Deeply repentant, first I come this day
To greet and help thee on thy welcome way ;
With joy to hail thee to thy home again
Where may'st thou live long o'er the land to
reign,
And in thy retrospects thy comforts be
On deeds of mercy, nor the least on me.”

He ended ;—but before the king had time
To well revolve, and weigh the weight of crime,

Rash Abishai, vengeance to invoke,
Thus in harsh question on his error spoke :
" Shall not," said he, " a man of such a deed,
In retribution for his conduct bleed?
One who has dared, devoid of holy dread,
To curse the king, and our anointed head."
" No !" David quickly in return replies,
" I spurn thy conduct, and the thought despise ;
A foe may prompt it, but no one shall bleed,
For past offences or for present deed.
Consider I am king, restored again,
Once more the 'sovereign o'er the land to reign ;
Then better deeds should at this time employ ;
The fruits of mercy, and untainted joy."

Having thus firm his generous mind express'd,
He glanced at Shimei, whom he thus address'd :
" Thou shalt not die !—but guard thy future life
From evil conduct, and the tongue of strife."

Shimei bow'd thanks—disqualified for speech,
By what he felt, for tongue and lip to reach ;
For death had hover'd—yes, the sword was
near

To cut him off from all his treasures here ;
To send his soul, had it thus quickly fled,
He knew not where—but where he had to dread ;
When sudden pardon all at once set free
A trembling culprit on the bended knee.

Happ'ly released, he turn'd to his employ,
And join'd his comrades with a heart of joy ;
Where now, from galling fears and terrors free,
He frisk'd all buoyant in the general glee.
Thus unchastised was pass'd his brutal strife ;
David took all, and kindly saved his life ;
Yet others spared him not in after times,
For life he lost to expiate his crimes.

END OF BOOK THE TENTH.

D A V I D.



Book the Eleventh.

ARGUMENT.

David and the venerable Barzillai have an affectionate parting.—Israel and Judah dispute on their right of claim to David.—Sheba in the dispute draws off a party against David.—Judah are principally left behind, faithful to their king.—David enters the city again, and is well received there.—Mephibosheth attends upon him with congratulations on his return, but is coolly and ungenerously received.—Joab assassinates Amasa ; after which he pursues Sheba to the city of Abel.—A conference there between him and a wise woman, who addresses him off the walls.—Sheba's head is thrown by her to the army, as requested, and the besiegers retire.—A three years' famine comes upon the land.—Is stayed upon seven of Saul's descendants being given up to the injured Gibeonites, to be slain.—War again with the Philistines, and several battles with them, in one of which David is near being slain ; but proving successful, and the last of their giants being killed, it ended all their wars for David's life.—David, in pride and obstinacy, numbers the people capable of bearing arms.—A pestilence is sent in punishment to him, and for the crimes of the nation.—David, deeply humbled, repents of his rashness, intercedes, and the pestilence ceases.—David's decline of health.—Abishag, a young lively woman, is engaged to administer heat to him, and become his nurse.

DAVID.

Book the Eleventh.

The time now came when two near friends
must part,
Which David felt to closely touch his heart ;
Nor could Barzillai rising grief suppress,
For son and friend to leave brought a distress ;
Their tears were mutual, and as copious shed,
While they craved blessings on each other's head.
They then embraced, with a prospective pain
From the small chance to ever meet again.

The ancient man now back-returning trod
With royal escort to his own abode,
Jordan to pass ; which once more safely o'er,
His foot he printed on the grateful shore,

And homeward moved with thankfulness and
praise,
To spend in peace his few remaining days.

Now towards Gilgal David moved that day,
While part of Israel join'd them on their way ;
But only half of all their numbers there ;
And these, all-captious, hard on Judah bear :
“ For why,” they say, “ have you officious come
To join the monarch to conduct him home,
Alone to bring him with his numerous train,
Once more o'er Jordan, over us to reign ?”

The men of Judah a rejoinder made,
And thus in answer to the carpers said :
“ This we have done, nor be the fact denied,
Because in kindred we are first allied ;
Then who so likely to be first to come
To fetch our sovereign to regain his home ?
We are a liberal, self-supported host,
Not at the king's nor at the kingdom's cost ;
Nor gifts receive—but rather give than take,
And only serve for pure affection's sake.”

Quick in return the Israelites reply :
“ Your deeds we censure, and your rights deny :
You may in kindred as you please delight,
But in the king we claim a tenfold right ;
Then why did we seem nothing in your eyes,
To scorn our counsel, and our aid despise ?”

Judah retorts as warm ; and thus they jar
In party discord, and in words of war,
When one named Sheba, resolute of heart,
Starts up to act a forward, daring part ;
Who quick to mischief, now observant finds
This a fit season to arrest their minds,
And take advantage of the heat that rose,
To lead a party to desert the cause ;
And raise himself in his ambitious aim
To high distinction, where he had no claim.
Inflated thus, he took a rising ground,
A trumpet blew with a sonorous sound ;
And soon he drew a vast assembly near,
This speech of treason, roar'd aloud, to hear :
“ Israel, arise ! support your just degree,
Nor cringe supinely on the bended knee :
In David we no right or interest claim,
Nor pay we homage to his boasted fame.
This upstart Shepherd, whom some blindly prize,
O'er us shall never rule and tyrannize ;
Then to your tents, O Israel, fly again,
And let him o'er his favourite Judah reign.”

Fired by this speech, the kindling flame arose
To bias crowds against the royal cause :
He snatch'd the moment—quickly led away,
And thousands follow'd with a loud huzza !
Each with flush'd spirits, and a roving mind ;
Defection theirs, but loyalty behind.

The mass thus heated, seldom can be brought
To reason hear or to a steady thought;
For when a subject bursts upon the view,
Headlong they rush, and right or wrong pursue.
Rash act !—for mostly unto treason deeds,
Or soon or late, due punishment succeeds :
So here it proved, for this rebellion led
To Sheba's capture, and to lose his head,
While timely caution from the froward strife
Would have kept blameless, and preserved his
life.

And had strong measures been outstretch'd o'er
all,

Like him, unnumber'd had been doom'd to fall,
But harsh retort the king in mercy waved, .
Full pardon granted, and the whole were saved.

Thus clear'd of mixture, Judah hail as one
David's resumption of the vacant throne,
Under whose banner, with a grand display
Of mirth and music thousands take the way :
Yet while thus cheerful they their time employ
They taste a mixture in their cup of joy,
Since Israel desert the common cause,
And in wild faction all their tribes oppose.

Now Salem reached, crowds of all ranks
appear,
To greet the strangers with a loyal cheer,

Whose lively tokens now most grateful come,
To bring conviction of a welcome home,
And as a balance to compose the mind,
Against defection they had left behind.

The palace gain'd, the king had there to find
A check again to irritate his mind ;
For the ten women who had special charge
Of the whole household, and were left at large,
Had broke their trust, and e'en to lewdness run,
In open daylight, with his rebel son.
A reckoning came, when summary justice broke
Upon their heads with an unwelcome stroke.
Proofs were at large ;—hence to a lonely cell
They were condemn'd in future life to dwell.

With ardent heart Mephibosheth now came—
Came as he could, for he was weak and lame ;
But he was loath to stay the least behind,
When warmth to David so possess'd his mind.
He came but just restored in mind and dress ;
For much he suffer'd in the late distress,
In taking to himself so keen a part,
Which overpower'd his sympathetic heart.
Since David took his self-preserving flight,
He felt no comfort or in day or night ;
But from that time his feet remain'd undrest,
His beard untrimm'd to hang upon his breast ;
His robes unbrush'd ; his linen gone unwash'd ;
With half-tied sandals, dirty, old, and splash'd.

Strong emblems these, so long neglected worn,
Of what his mind in privacy had borne ;
But now trimm'd up again that very day,
He came the foremost his respects to pay ;
In broken speech sincerely to impart
The honest feelings of his tender heart :
But ere with diffidence he silence broke,
Thus quick in question David frowning spoke :
“ Why then, Mephibosheth, such lack in thee,
As here to loiter void of care for me ? ”

With starting tears, and heart-felt grief express'd,
The injured prince this just excuse address'd :
“ My lord, O king !—the fault was not in me,
For I was anxious to have follow'd thee ;
And though unable much of toil to bear,
Yet I was anxious in thy griefs to share ;
But as on foot I could no effort make
To join the party and with you partake,
I Ziba charged, and trusted to his care,
My ass to saddle, and all things prepare ;
Instead of which, he took in speed away
Ill founded tales before thy view to lay :
But thou art able, in superior light,
To see things clearly and to judge aright ;
And power is thine ;—then be it right in me
To bow submissive to thy just decree ;
For what am I, or what of right is mine ?
All I possess—all I enjoy, is thine :

For I as one—and all the house of Saul,
Were at thy mercy, or to stand or fall;
Then why in me can there be right to crave
More than I need, or what thy goodness gave?
Nay, let me rather prize what I possess,
And for the boon the generous giver bless."

Thus spoke the grateful prince, then bow'd
his head,
When thus again the king austerely said :
" Why dwell'st thou so on matters not in hand ?
Have I not said—you two divide the land ?"

Laconic answer !—which must strangely sound
From one so long for equity renown'd.
Surely he miss'd it in the case before,
Nor yet adjusts it, though he might restore ;
Nor further tries the cause, though clear to view
That condemnation to one side is due :
But he had err'd, and did not brook to bend
By full confession to aright his friend.
Then double error in the case we find,
For pride and injury were doubtless join'd ;
Pride not to own ; and, what is hard to say,
Unjust—to give another's right away.
A claim he had, seen in a two-fold light ;
By birthright first—and next by gift, a right :
Yet if but given, gifts are esteem'd to be
In honour sacred, and for ever free.

See what is man—the wisest and the best,
When human passions occupy the breast !
And few there are whom they will not assail,
And more or less at weaker times prevail ;
But for such slips the righteous feel a smart,
That brings contrition, and adjusts the heart,
While careless ones pass on, too oft possess'd
Of a false peace, and a polluted rest ;
For true attention never fails to find
That slighted checks produce a callous mind ;
But soon or late, time mostly comes to these
To rouse their senses from their beds of ease.

The prince composedly heard the king's reply,
Nor did he further vindication try ;
But left all calm for David to decide,
And in affection meekly thus replied :
“ Nay, 'tis not wealth I seek—I have my share
Of earthly treasure, and assiduous care :
Let him take all ; for I enough obtain,
Since thou art safe, and thus restored again.”

They closed ;—for David's ruminating mind,
Was more absorb'd in what he left behind,
On Sheba's party, hail'd by him along,
So warm in faction, and in numbers strong ;
Anticipating what would sure succeed,
If left too long to prosecute the deed.
Amasa then he calls, and bids him raise
The force of Judah in some stated days,

Sedition to suppress. He adds, "And then
Be there as chief to stimulate the men."
This message given, his way in speed he bent,
Alas ! unconscious of a near event ;
For king or court no more he ever saw,
But fell a victim to a treach'rous foe !

While thus engaged, Amasa's lengthen'd stay
Made David thoughtful at the long delay,
Anticipating some severe event,
Perhaps e'en Judah drawn to discontent ;
And daring not to make a longer stand,
He Hushai call'd, and gave him this command :
"Go thou in haste, and risk no more delays,
And in the city all the mighty raise ;
Follow this Sheba with a vult'rous sight,
And crush him early with a lion's might ;
Lest strength he gather as he scours the plain,
And strong-fenced cities to secure him gain,
Where he detection sily may evade,
And, by his cunning, wavering minds persuade ;
And thus, by art, by time, and force, obtain
What we can never from his grasp regain ;
Which may be worse, and more extensive far,
Than Absalom's revolt, and civil war."

True to his charge in his exalted post,
Hushai now raises a commanding host ;
Departs ;—while Joab with another force
Moves on to join in military course,

When at a stone in Gibeon, noted far,
They meet Amasa with his troops of war,
Where now in three-fold strength they form to
pass,

Consolidated in a powerful mass :
But envious Joab, of a cruel heart,
Brook'd not to act in an inferior part ;
And to this chief his disaffected mind
Had long a death-blow underneath design'd.
The time now came his comrade's blood to spill,
And wreak in vengeance his insatiate will ;
Which thus occurred : across his loins was slung
A belt, in which a sword suspended hang ;
When, as by chance, out-slipp'd the glittering
blade,

But scarce one moment undiscover'd laid ;
Yet as Amasa no designings saw,
It struck his bosom with no sense of awe,
Nor did he feel it from the naked blade,
As Joab forward his advances made ;
For all his ill designs and arts of guile
Were well glozed over with a treach'rous smile.
Fawning he came, and his obeisance paid,
When mildly thus he kind inquiry made ;
" Art thou in health, my brother ?"—
Then by the beard he took him, as to prove
By the fraternal kiss his pledge of love ;
Instead of which, his active hand below
Darted the weapon with a fatal blow,

When from the deeply-penetrated wound
Out-gush'd the entrails and the blood around,
A while strong nature struggled in the strife,
But soon o'ercome, he bade adieu to life ;
While fellow-soldiers, who were standing by,
In parting anguish heaved the pitying sigh.

Thus the meek lamb beholds the fatal knife
Prepared to rob it of its blood and life ;
And fears no ill, till by the piercing stroke
It writhing feels the thread of life is broke.

O wretched man !—what an atrocious deed,
Thus in cold blood to make thy comrade bleed !
How base in thee, of military fame,
To tarnish honour with th' assassin's name !
So wide-opposed to all the just and brave,
Who fight in public, but in private save.
But as with Abner, so again we find
The base descendings of a cruel mind,
That stops at nothing, or with foe or friend,
To glut its rancour, and to gain its end :
But retributions in the present time
Are seen at seasons to rebound on crime ;
So Joab found :—his measures met a blast ;
For wanton murders brought his death at last.

Now Joab forward sped, his agent stood
O'er the distended corse, imbrued in blood,

And press'd the men, in their advances on,
Their chief to follow with the former gone;
But the sad sight a general interest gain'd,
And crowds too long upon the road detain'd ;
For most aside the horrid object drew,
As they pass'd on, to stop and take a view ;
Nor view'd they heedless, but with pungent
grief,

To see thus murder'd such a valued chief:
This seen, the man then took the corse, to lay
Within a field, out of the travellers' way,
O'er which a cloth, to hide the wounds, he
spread,
Then back in speed to take his station fled,
And left him there in burning heat of day,
To hungry vultures and to dogs a prey:

The man return'd, still found a pressing need
To urge the soldiers as their ranks succeed,
For though the object was from sight convey'd,
Yet many halted, and inquiry made ;
For deep concern each thoughtful mind possess'd,
Which gloom and sadness in their looks ex-
press'd,

Now o'er the troops, and in Amasa's stead,
Joab assumes, in full command, to lead ;
His wish thus gaining, paramount o'er all,
His own advance, and this commander's fall,

This self-made chief of chiefs, thus pompous
grown;

Pushes on eager search from town to town ;
With Abishai, still in some command,
He leaves no refuge as he sweeps the land ;
But fruitless all, till Abel they draw near,
When, near the city, better signs appear ;
For news reports, the rebel thought to pass
His life secure within its bars of brass ;
But false his rest !—for 'tis not Abel's wall,
Though strong and lofty, can prevent his fall.

Sheba pent here, they, to secure his death,
Surround the city with a ridge of earth ;
Then sink a trench that in the centre stood
The town devoted to a scene of blood,
For engines now play'd on each massive bar
With all the thunder of tremendous war ;
While battering-rams began their rage to burst,
To bring down buildings into heaps of dust ;
When from its walls a female's voice is heard,
One foremost of her sex, and much prefer'd,
Whose wisdom, and whose patriotic zeal,
Had oft been witness'd for the public weal ;
And now aroused, she from the lofty wall,
With a shrill voice, was heard aloud to call :
“ Warriors !—attend !—tell Joab to come near,
That he may reason with the people here.”

The chief apprized,—he quickly went his way,
 To hear what now this orator could say ;
 But ere her speech of reasoning powers began,
 She briefly asked, " Art thou the very man ?"
 As short he answer'd, " Yes."—" Well then, I
 pray,"

(She in return,) " attend to what I say."

" Speak on," he adds, " for I am now so near
 Thy voice comes clearly to my listening ear."

The woman then resumes, while tumults cease,
 And fix'd attention lulls the whole to peace :
 " I call thee, general, to approach the bar
 To give thy reasons for so rash a war.
 For unprovoked, through any cause we know,
 You now involve the innocent in woe.
 Say then, why thus we must your rage receive,
 And if a reason, now that reason give.

" It has been said, that when the people jar,
 They come to Abel, and so end the war :
 If true—so be it on this very day ;
 Listen to counsel, and your anger stay ;
 For here we are all citizens of peace,
 And wish that discord may for ever cease !
 Then why abruptly, and without a cause,
 Treat us so harsh, as your decided foes ?
 And thus the peaceful at their homes annoy,
 Their lives endanger, and their town destroy ?"

Charm'd with the female's voice and solid
sense,

The chief thus answer'd to her eloquence :

" 'Tis far from me—ah! be it very far;

To deal the scourge of unprovoked war;

Nor thee, nor them, would I the least annoy,

Nor town nor walls in wanton rage destroy;

But know, intrepid female, you this day

Harbour a rebel whom we seek to slay :

His name is Sheba, who by trait'rous ways,

Has tried his art a civil war to raise ;

And till to justice we the offender bring,

There is no safety for the realm or king.

'Tis him we seek ; and if this man you give,

Peace we restore, and every soul shall live."

The terms were grateful, and with welcome
came,

When thus rejoin'd the Israelitish dame :

" If this be all for which you here contend,

Soon shall his head from off these walls descend;

For what is one, and that for crimes to pay,

To thousands here of innocents to slay ? "

So said—the matron, glad of such success

To end the pressure of their great distress,

Flies to their city chiefs, the terms to lay ;

They hear—attend—and readily obey.

Pleased by such means to quit surrounding strife,

They doom the captive to the loss of life.

Brought to the block by powers he must obey,
His head was sever'd off and borne away ;
Then given the female, who no moments lost,
But threw the prize to satisfy the host.
As from the top of the stupendous walls
The head, fresh-bleeding, unto Joab falls;
Loud shouts of triumph either side employ,
In simultaneous, mutual bursts of joy.

The end thus gain'd, their hostile measures
cease,
And Joab, faithful, grants the promised peace.
His order given, the shrill-toned trumpet's sound
Proclaims retreat to all the troops around ;
When thousands on the walls, with grateful view,
See them recede, and gladly bid adieu ;
Whilst many a soldier is rejoiced to come,
Turn'd from his perils with his face to home.

At last, the city reach'd, with high applause ..
They are saluted in the public cause ;
But still the tidings greater pleasures bring
To crown the wishes of the anxious king ;
For prospects open, as the troubles cease,
That all will settle in united peace,
And wearied people join in one accord,
To own him sovereign, and their lawful lord.

Thus things conspired bright prospects to renew,
And paint them grateful to the monarch's view.

Propitious era !—whence all cheering hope
Took into future times a pleasing scope,
There saw enjoyments in this view increase,
Crown'd with home-comforts, and a land at peace.
Fallacious hope !—soon other scenes employ,
Than thus to revel in the courts of joy.
He came to rule indeed, but his command
Was only o'er a deeply suffering land ;
For soon a scourge prevail'd with awful dread,
And laid some thousands of his subjects dead ;
Nor knew the king how soon he might be one
Call'd to the grave, and all his glories gone !
Three years of famine, big with death and woe,
The people now, alas ! were doom'd to know,
Sent in the secret by the Lord's command,
To overspread and desolate the land !

David inquired the supernatural cause
Why such affliction in the states arose ?
The answer was : “ The punishments that fall
Arise from crimes within the line of Saul,
Whose bloody house the Gibeonites annoy'd
In wanton war, and countless lives destroy'd.”

Thus came the answer, but no word to say
What would appease, and what th' affliction stay.
Then from the Gibeonites he tries to find
What sacrifice will reconcile the mind ;
In hope thereby to pacify that Hand,
Which seem'd outstretch'd to desolate the land.

"What shall I do for you, (the monarch said,) :
In what atone, that wrath may be allay'd ?
What you require my mandate shall afford,
If you but bless the people of the Lord,
That we may try if haply that may prove
To reconcile, and our distress remove."
The proposition made, they soon reply :
"No one of you do we require to die ;
Nor for your gold do we in avarice call
In retribution for the house of Saul :
Yet blood for blood must go, for nothing less.
Can this great grievance to the full redress.
Seven of Saul's line to hang, of right we claim,
To blot his crime, and stigmatize his name ;
Disgrace to fix upon that man who gave
Our guiltless tribes to an untimely grave ;
And sought, while living, with despotic hand,
Our extirpation from our native land."
To this demand the king in haste agreed,
With hopes alive to have the nation freed.
Seven were selected, but at David's will
Mephibosheth was spared from such an ill ;
Who still preserved him from all harm, to prove
His mem'ry faithful to his father's love,
To those strong bonds which had between them
pass'd,
Seal'd with an oath, through future times to last.

The helpless victims now are given to bear
Their dooms alike ;—an early death to share !

Whom, for those faults in which they bore no
part,

They hang in Gibeah, with unfeeling heart.
Severe ! and far as man to man can go ;
Yet 'tis but transient—but a ceasing woe :
Beyond this state no punishments extend
From fellow-mortals, but with life they end.
Then past the conflict of such short distress,
The Almighty may with due requital bless ;
By bliss eternal in another sphere,
Balance the seeming wrongs inflicted here.
Then judge not—man ! nor deeds injustice call,
Which thus to mortals on this earth befall,
For thy perceptions unto time relate,
And cannot reach into a higher state,
There to behold, in all assign'd degrees,
Transcendent justice in the last decrees.
Wisely then leave what thou canst never scan,
And keep that station which belongs to man ;
“ To bend submissive—nor his lot deplore ;—
To live in faith, and God in all adore.”

Rizpah, the mother of two sons thus slain,
Feels the keen anguish of parental pain,
And now does all maternal duty pay
To guard these reliques both by night and day ;
By day defending from the vultures' might,
And beasts of prey that prowl for food at night,
E'en till the signs of favour come again
Of dews ascending, or of gentle rain,

Till which it seems they were in sight to stay,
 And none allow'd to bear them hence away.
 At last the signal come ; no more in air
 To be exposed—it ended Rispah's care ;
 For David now applies with earnest mind
 The bones of Saul and all his house to find.
 To this collection of the royal line
 They give the honours of the sacred shrine ;
 But Saul's and Jonathan's on splendid hier,
 In foremost rank of funeral rites appear.
 Sepulchred thus ;—such is the final end,
 And last deposit of his faithful friend,
 To whose dear memory at the close appears
 A deep sensation in his farewell tears !

The scourge of death thus stay'd, now once
 again

Health was restored, and plenty spread the plain ;
 But trials yet came on ;—another rose
 From the Philistines, his inveterate foes.
 These restless people flew again to war,
 And with bold threatenings spread their armies far.
 David must rise ;—he takes the studded shield,
 And with his thousands seeks th' embattled field ;
 There fights courageous, but, alas ! at length,
 Fatigue o'erpower'd him, and he lost his strength :
 He grew too faint to make the quick advance,
 To raise the spear, or dart the wounding lance.
 This was perceived by a gigantic foe
 Who raised his hand to strike a fatal blow ;

But here, behold, that Power who rules o'er all,
Would not permit his favourite thus to fall ;
Would not permit a gentile hand to claim
The rude extinction of so fair a fame.
A shielding hand was sent to interpose,
And rescue David in the sacred cause.
Prompt Abishai quickly stopp'd the blow,
Engaged the giant, and dispatch'd the foe.

The men thus seeing David's death was near,
Felt for their king a loyal-hearted fear,
And in their zeal, bound by an oath, declare
He shall no longer lead them forth to war ;
“ Lest” as they say, “ in some succeeding fight .
Thy life be lost, and Israel quench its light.”

Again—again—and yet again were wars ;
In three more battles clash'd the sounding cars ;
But though the pagans tried and tried again,
Yet all their efforts were but urged in vain ;
For still defeats o'ercame their furious host,
Their troops were vanquish'd, and their heroes
lost.

In these fierce battles, 'midst the numbers slain,
Were three huge giants, tyrants of the plain ;
The last of whom, besides his size and might,
Was in some members of unnatural sight ;
For on each foot were seen six toes to stand,
And six large fingers on each sinewy hand.

Of giant birth—of limbs that all excel—
Of vaunting spirit ;—yet the monster fell !
Thus the last offspring of their giants dead,
And none now left to rule with towering head ;
And having battles in succession lost,
It stay'd the courage of the pagan host ;
So fully quell'd it, that in David's life
No more was witness'd of their wars and strife.

Thus ere the king was summon'd to the grave,
His God, in mercy, peace and plenty gave ;
For which he felt, as he was wont to feel,
A grateful bosom, and a pious zeal,
That caused his heart in fervent strains to raise
His hymns of thanks, of gratitude, and praise ;
Which in memorials stand, and where we find
A lively portrait of the author's mind.
Safely pavilion'd here, ah ! might he stand,
Fix'd on this rock, and better times command ;
Enjoy his quiet when so richly blest
With every comfort in the lap of rest ;
That the few years before his final close
Might be the emblem of his last repose.
But not his lot !—for he must witness more
Of storms to beat him ere he gain the shore.

In sultry days a gathering cloud will rise,
O'ercast the heavens—and thunders rend the
skies ;

But pass'd away, the sun breaks forth anew,
And paints all pleasing to th' attracted view ;
Yet—ere 'tis long, clouds rise on clouds again,
Renew their rage, and deluge all the plain :
So David's life ;—such storms he often knew,
With change of sunshine, flattering to his view,
And oft he bask'd as in the cheering beam,
Thought all was over, and enjoy'd the gleam ;
When swelling clouds again his heaven o'ercast,
And brought another, and another blast !

David now felt too anxious to obtain
The population of his vast domain,
Prompted by pride, though we are loth to tell,
By which men fall, and even angels fell.
This was permitted ; for the nation too
Had heaven offended, and a scourge was due ;
Hence king and people felt, ere long, the rod
Of an offended and chastising God.

Joab was call'd, and had a strict command
To count the people over all the land,
From end to end ; but wisely he foresaw
The deed was wrong, and let his master know.
“ Now let the people,” says this wary man,
“ Be e'er so great from farthest end to Dan,
May God an hundred fold bestow on thee,
And may my Lord the countless numbers see ;
But why shouldst thou in such an act delight ?
Will it be grateful in Jehovah's sight ?

Or rather will it not a trespass prove,
To raise his anger, and to lose his love? "

Such modest hints for him thus Joab gave,
His king and country from all harm to save ;
But David kept a still determined mind,
The numbers whom he solely ruled to find ;
Nor could the captains of his hosts succeed
To turn his purpose from the favourite deed.

Joab obeys :—the captains forced comply,
For subjects seldom dare their kings deny.
They leave the monarch ; and thus at command
Compass the borders of th' extensive land ;
Pass to and fro, and with much time and pains,
Collect the numbers that the realm contains.

At last return'd, and all summ'd up, they bring
The vast amount to gratify the king ;
In lieu of which, within his breast he found
Conviction seated, and a painful wound !
His error thus perceived, he felt the smart,
For God condemn'd him in his inward part ;
He felt the value of th' advice denied,
With clear perception of his ruling pride,
And much he grieved, nor ceased he to lament ;
But ah ! too late to stop the dire event.
" I see—I own it—gracious Lord," says he,
" The sin I've signed, and my offence to Thee."

Foolish indeed the act that I have done,
And all the burden rests on me alone:
But be Thou pleased to hear my humble prayer,
Once more to pardon, and in love to spare;
'That as I live the longer, I may see
Thy goodness boundless to the world and me."

Thus David humbly now preferr'd his prayer,
But heavenly mercy was not won to spare;
For Israel had offended—and from hence
Judgment hung o'er them for the high offence;
And now the time was come the scourge to bring,
By second means, through their offending king,
In which himself a part must deeply bear;
Though not to death—yet an abundant share.

After a night of thought, when morning grey
Began to dapple for th' approach of day,
The prophet Gad a duteous sense obey'd,
And to the king an early visit paid,
There to discharge what had been clearly given,
In a night vision, as the will of Heaven.
The hoary-headed seer, in awful frame
And painful feelings, to the monarch came;
But there was glad, in some degree to find
In him a broken and contrited mind;
When thus he spoke: "A message know, O
king,
To thee, with sorrow, from the Lord I bring,

And thus I am to say : " Thy crimes now call
For heavy vengeance on thy head to fall :
But of three judgments thou thy choice mayst
make,
Though any one thy realm and thee shall shake :
Shall seven hard years of famine drain the earth,
And bring its thousands to untimely death ?
Or for three months shalt thou be forced to fly
Before thy foes, and see thy forces die ?
Or shall the pestilence prevail o'er all
And for three days a sweeping number fall ?
Such are the terms ;—consider then, and say
What charge in answer I must now convey ? "

The king, perplex'd on such an awful choice,
Trembled in fear, nor raised awhile his voice ;
For though a favour when of choice possess'd,
Yet sore the issue when he chose the best.
At last he faintly says : " A strait I feel ;—
But let me be at the Almighty's will ;
Much safer so than if myself, and all,
Should to the hands of fellow-mortals fall.
To Him I bow—and to his righteous hand
Commit myself and my devoted land."

The choice thus fix'd, a pestilence was sent,
That seventy thousand from his kingdom rent,
And thus reduced, by a quick turn of tide,
The very lives on which was built his pride.

And here we see what horrors may, from crime,
O'erwhelm a state in little space of time.

Dire was the scourge, as if to clear the earth
Of human life by this tremendous death;
For a destroying angel onward past,
And spread around a pestilential blast.
When David saw the many thousands fall,
And seem'd himself the grievous cause of all,
It roused his feelings, and with great dismay,
It made him thus in sympathy to pray :
“ Lord, it was I !—I—I have sinn'd to thee,
Then should thy vengeance only rest on me ;
For these poor sheep, alas ! what have they done ?
Have they transgress'd, and from their duty gone ?
No !—they are guiltless—it is I—and all
Thy wrath on me and on my house should fall.”

The dreadful angel still moved o'er the earth,
Diffusing, as he went, devouring death ;
And o'er Jerusalem come, he spread alarm,
With blazing sword, and an outstretched arm,
Ready to strike.—David beheld with awe,
And inward trembled at the threaten'd blow,
Who, with the elders, prone in sackcloth laid,
And intercession with Jehovah made ;
When won with pity, an all-gracious Lord,
By quick command, stay'd the pestiferous sword—
“ It is enough !” he said, “ now hold thy hand ;
The city spare—nor move till I command.”

Strict to the charge, the menace now was
waved,
And the metropolis thus in mercy saved ;
Yet the fierce angel, at renew'd command,
Pass'd o'er the country with destructive hand,
Where still the sickness raged and far was spread,
Increasing thousands to the number dead ;
But ere 'twas long, Gad had in charge to bring
A gracious message to relieve the king.
" To where Araunah dwells, go up," he said,
" Near which the spreading of the plague was
stay'd,
And on the thrashing floor, with humble fear,
Unto the Lord a holy altar rear.

David rejoiced ;—and ready to obey,
Proceeds in faith, afraid of all delay,
With all his servants ;—none thought fit to spare,
As 'tis unknown what will be wanted there.
Araunah and his house with awe had seen
The angel hovering heaven and earth between,
When his four sons, struck with superior dread,
Had shrunk aghast, and each had hid his head.

Araunah met the king with bow profound,
E'en so respectful as to touch the ground ;
Who question'd, " What his servant could
afford
To claim a visit from his honour'd lord ? "

The king returns : " Thus in an awful hour
I come in haste to buy thy thrashing-floor,
That clad in sackcloth, and in humble fear,
I may an altar to Jehovah rear,
And gain the favour from his holy hand
To stop the judgment in the suffering land."

" Good is thy cause," Araunah then replied ;
" Ask what thou wilt—it shall not be denied.
Behold, the place is thine ;—the oxen take,
And sacrifices here unsparing make :
For fire, the yoke and implements are free
At thy command, and all I give to thee ;
Do then thy part, and may the Lord thy God
Accept the offerings, and suspend the rod."

The king was pleased thus all at hand to find,
And in the giver such a generous mind ;
Yet to accept he thought too low it laid
A sacrifice, without a value paid.
After short pause, in order to explain
His hesitation, he return'd again :
" Thy offer's liberal, but thou must not give,
Nor I thus lightly at thy hand receive ;
For far from me be that cheap sacrifice
Which I could offer that has cost no price.
Nay, never let such holy deeds be cross'd
By narrow thought of what the measures cost ;
For what can we bestow of all we have
But what th' Almighty in his goodness gave ? "

The price they fix'd ;—all for six hundred sold
 Of shekels, weigh'd in bars of massive gold ;
 And both content ; for at such times as these
 All mundane treasures scarce can vex or please ;
 The mind more fix'd on life's depending breath,
 A long hereafter, and the pangs of death.

The purchase thus on ready terms agreed,
 The oxen soon before the altar bleed ;
 When wood is placed, and fiery columns rise
 In smoky volumes welcomed to the skies ;
 For heaven appeased, the angel had command
 To sheath his sword, and further spare the land ;
 When the prompt Seraph with the charge
 complies,
 Withdraws his blade, and darts into the skies ;
 On which the plague from future rage is stay'd,
 Warm thanks are raised, and vast oblations made.

Happy the land, restored to health again,
 From sickness, horror, and tormenting pain ;
 Yet the survivors had to mourn the end
 Of many kindred, and of many a friend ;
 Which oft the mind in retrospect employ'd,
 And damp'd the comforts they had else enjoy'd.

Now David, much exhausted on the stage,
 Feels prematurely the approach of age,
 For hoary hair oft on the head appears
 From crowded cares, as well as length of years ;

Yet seventy suns had run, and let him know
His share of blessings, and his lot of woe ;
And brought him now, through all conflicting strife,
To stand becalm'd, as on the verge of life.
Though strong in mentals, yet his corporal frame
But feebly felt the glow of vital flame ;
When, to diffuse the animating heat,
And keep the heart to lengthen'd life to beat,
The famed for knowledge did their utmost part
In all the wisdom of the healing art ;
Yet all fell short in his declining days
To give fresh strength, and animation raise.
At last they judg'd, heat most congenial came
From life to life—from human frame to frame,
And virgin warmth the strongest to impart
Re-animation to a languid heart :
Hence they proposed a maid of glowing heat,
In whom the arteries with full vigour beat—
One Abishag, a lively nymph, they chose,
To watch the king, and by his side repose,
Warmth to impart, and night and day prepare
Reviving cordials with assiduous care.

Thus Abishag awhile due service paid,
And might afford some temporary aid,
But restoration they could not obtain ;
They did their utmost—but they strove in vain !



D A V I D.

Book the Twelfth.

ARGUMENT.

Adonijah, David's son, starts up to take possession of the throne before his father's decease; draws a large party to him, and entertains them with a liberal feast.—The prophet Nathan apprises Bathsheba.—She intercedes with David, and obtains for her son Solomon the renewed grant to inherit the kingdom; and he is that day crowned king, while the other party are feasting.—Adonijah defeated, is now left to shift for himself, and flies to the horns of the altar for protection.—Solomon, as king, sends for him, and grants his pardon on condition of future good conduct.—David drawing towards his end, convenes the chiefs of the kingdom.—He zealously addresses them and his son, particularly on his favourite object of building the temple.—The company enter deeply into the spirit of the work, and contribute largely to the general provision for the service.—Three thousand head of cattle constitute a sacrifice on the occasion.—Solomon at the same time is again crowned king, with great rejoicings.—David gives his last advice to his son, and soon after dies.—The funeral, and general mourning of the people.—Conclusion.

DAVID.

Book the Twelfth.

David enfeebled now, unfit to stand
An active ruler o'er a pop'lous land,
One of his house, a long-indulged son,
Boldly attempted to usurp the throne.

Prince Adonijah, this spoil'd son of pride,
Thought time too long before his parent died,
And being high in mind, and rashly vain,
He deem'd himself well qualified to reign.
So Absalom before him vainly thought,
But all was soon to fatal ruin brought ;
Enough to warn against such steps to tread,
Yet short it fell to guard his giddy head ;
For now he tries with lavish hand, and cost,
In pomp to fit him for the envied post.

His charlots roll ;—his guards in numbers wait,
And fifty footmen run before in state.
Risen to such notice, he attempts to bring
The men of note from the lethargic king,
Whom with the first he fiery Joab draws,
In military front to aid his cause ;
And to preside o'er sacerdotal things,
Abiathar, the supple friend of kings.
But he, poor man, too easy to persuade,
Dearly, ere long, for his defection paid.
Back the tide ebb'd ;—the next in power, no
more
To holy functions would his rank restore,
But lost to influence, and no more in fame,
A banish'd exile he at last became !
A striking lesson this for some to read,
To mark unstable deeds to what they lead.
Sincerity and truth are precious things ;
Prized in a slave—the ornament of kings ;
Virtues that take with them their own reward,
Implicit confidence, and due regard ;
And often win—for who can be so vile
As to repay sincerity with guile ?

Thus rose defection ; but the chief remain
True to their king, whom no allurements gain :
And wiser they ; for mostly in the end
Success and blessings on his cause attend ;
For though the road at times was rough to tread,
Yet to a smoother part it mostly led.

This rebel son now a rich feast provides ;—
The deer is slaughter'd with its speckled sides ;
Fat sheep, fed oxen, in a numerous train,
For the great banquet are unsparing slain,
And lavish store, drawn from the juicy vine,
Flashes in golden cups the tempting wine :
Fit agents these to all around inspire
With vivid spirits and intemperate fire—
To urge them on a work of pride to aid,
Which soon its votaries in a snare betray'd.

Here to partake an invitation goes
By a selection fitted to his cause ;
Nor were his brothers of his guests the least
To share a portion of the jovial feast,
Though Solomon was left behind to stay,
Unfit to join them on that factious day ;
For rival sons, it broke the bond of love,
As brother here against a brother strove.

Now to the revelling feast vast numbers draw ;
The rich, the poor, the weak, the mighty go ;
Some wild in party ;—nor perhaps the least,
A number only to enjoy the feast ;
Yet all at last, though simply some begun,
Go with the stream, and to disorder run ;
For feasting freely void of due control,
They drown reflection in the copious bowl,
And thus indulging in the liberal glass,
In one strong vortex whirl the giddy mass.

The faithful prophet, Nathan, now foresaw
The gathering mischief with a sense of awe,
And thought no time to counteract the host
Should on the occasion be supinely lost ;
As by delays they might a power obtain
Which David's party scarcely could regain.
He then in haste to queen Bathsheba goes
To state the danger of the royal cause,
Whom in the interview, with anxious breast,
He thus, abrupt, with energy address'd :
" Hast thou not heard, O queen ! and to thy pain,
That Adonijah now assumes to reign,
While to the king his actions are unknown,
Although we tremble for the tottering crown ?
Then if thou'rt anxious Solomon to save
From a supplanter, and perhaps a grave,
Let me give counsel ;—lose no time to go
Before the king, to let him frankly know ;
Then say : ' O king ! didst thou not swear to me
That Solomon should reign instead of thee ?
Then why this upstart son this day to gain
The people's suffrage o'er the land to reign ?
For Adonijah, at this very hour,
Is on the point to gain the sovereign power.
This done ;—in haste I will come in to aid,
And all confirm thou hast before me said."

Her feelings roused, the queen, with anxious
heart,
Goes to the king her message to impart ;

Quick was her step, her bosom full of fears,
And in her eye a ready gush of tears.
An audience gain'd, she an obeisance made,
But thus was question'd ere a word she said:
“And what wouldst thou?”—She soon in answer

says :

“I would revive what pass'd in former days.
Didst thou not then declare that Solomon,
Thy child of choice, should sit upon the throne ;
And with an oath between the Lord and thee
Confirm this promise to that son and me ?
Then why this day should Adonijah gain
The people's choice by stratagem to reign ?
For know, my lord, what is to thee unknown,
He now is plotting to obtain the crown,
And at this time a factious crowd are gone
To choose him king, and fix him on the throne,
O'er whom Abiathar assumes to stand,
While Joab's captain o'er a martial band.
There too, while Solomon is left alone,
Are all thy sons to join the medley gone,
For whom he has a lavish feast prepared,
Nor life nor cost to treat his party spared,
But slain fat cattle, oxen, sheep, and fowl,
Nor spared with wines, to charge the copious bowl.

“Now all the eyes of Israel look to see
Whom thou wilt name to rule instead of thee ;
And if thy choice shall not be fix'd on one
Ere to thy fathers thou to rest art gone,

Sure mine, and I, will in succeeding life
Be deem'd offenders, and the cause of strife."

Just as she closed, before an answer came,
A voice proclaim'd the prophet Nathan's name.
The king apprized—the sudden stranger now
Forward advanced, and made a reverent bow ;
Then hasty thus : " Mayst thou, O king ! explain
If Adonijah thou design'st to reign ;
That when thou sleep'st, and from this stage art
gone,

He may succeed to fill th' imperial throne.
For he has slain his fatted beasts and sheep,
And rack'd his wines, a jovial feast to keep ;
To which thy several sons, excepting one,
With priests, with captains, and a host are gone,
Where now they revel, and with high renown
Proclaim their choice to Adonijah crown.
Then say, my lord, if they thy wish fulfil,
And thou hast kept from me thy secret will ? "

The king paused not to answer or explain,
But called the queen ; who now return'd again.
Anxious she came, and all attentive stood,
With a mix'd feeling, and in pensive mood ;
For words of great import had now to come
From David's lips to seal her future doom,
His wish to grant upon a favourite son,
Or blast their prospects, fix'd upon the throne ;

But quick relief came in this faltering voice :
“ Yes !—I decreed, and now confirm the choice ;
E’en as to thee before, again I swear,
That Solomon, thy son, the crown shall wear !
As the Lord lives, and has been pleased to bless,
Relieving oft from scenes of great distress,
It shall be so ;—nor longer now delay,
But all accomplish on this very day ;
He shall the summit of thy wish obtain,
And the sole sovereign over Israel reign.”

The queen, elated with maternal heat,
Felt her full heart with gratitude to beat,
Nor scarcely could, in her confused address,
Find flow of words her feelings to express ;
When to the ground her supple knees she plies,
And, “ Live my lord ! long live the king !” she
cries.

Risen on her feet, and thanks thus warmly paid,
She now no longer with the grant delay’d ;
But to her son, with elevated views,
Ran quick to greet him with the grateful news.

Now David calls the priests and prophets near,
In consequence this strict command to hear :
“ Take all my servants, nor the meanest spare,
And in due order Solomon prepare ;
A rich caparison of state provide,
And cause him on my royal mule to ride ;

Then down to Gihon go, e'en in a train
Like some strong army issuing to the plain,
Where with the sacred oil, and holy hand,
Anoint him sovereign in supreme command ;
Then blow the trumpet ;—let your music ring,
And hail him loudly your anointed king !
When this performance faithfully is done,
Conduct him back, and set him on the throne ;
For 'tis my will my place he shall supply,
And sway the sceptre ere I yet shall die."

Quick in return, " Amen !" they warmly cry,
" And may thy God ' Amen ! ' alike reply ;
That as the Lord has blest thee on the throne,
He may be also with thy honour'd son ;
Make him the hearts of all he rules to gain,
And e'en the son's exceed the father's reign."

Subservient to the charge, the men all bow,
And with good will and ardent spirits go.
There Solomon, enrobed in regal state,
Rides on his father's mule with mien elate,
While pressing crowds of mix'd pedestrians
throng,
Join to the cavalcade, and drive along.
To Gihon come ;—by Zadok now is borne,
With holy unction fill'd, th' official horn ;
Who on the youth pours with his hallow'd hand
The sacred oil, to fit for high command.

This done ;—the trumpets blow, the pipers play,
Till rocks resound, and echoes roll away,
Whilst crowds around, in joy exulting, sing :
“ All-hail our Sovereign !—live ! long live the
king !”

Thus matters here—while the pretender's
guests
Enjoy'd themselves with false inflated breasts,
Whom soon the uproar reached ; when in surprise,
“ What means that tumult !” Joab startled cries.
They all attentive the rejoicings hear,
And all, as conscious, feel a shock of fear.

Whilst listening thus, and as the sounds
confuse,
A youth advanced, big with important news,
Son of Abiathar, who as a spy
Had held a station as their ear and eye.
Sweating he comes beneath a torrid sun,
To tell how matters in the city run ;
When Adonijah thus : “ Come forward, youth,
Thou art a valiant, and a man of truth,
And bring'st good tidings.—Quick !—let all
appear !
For we are anxious, good or bad, to hear.”

“ No grateful news,” he says, “ to you I bring;
For Solomon, behold ! is made our king !
Quick though you were, yet quicker to oppose
Have been the agents in the royal cause ;

For in this space your *all* is overthrown,
And now another occupies the throne!
While you were here to feast, and drink your
 wine,
Our ancient king accomplish'd his design.
Nathan the prophet, and old Zadok priest,
He sent his errand—and without a feast ;—
Order'd his son to ride his mule, who sat
In gorgeous splendour, and in royal state,
Whom unto Gihon they conducted down,
Anointed there, and graced him with the crown ;
Then back returning, the vast crowds around
Hail'd him their king, and made the air resound ;
While the musicians, in their robes array'd,
On pipes, on timbrels, harps, and trumpets play'd.
These are the noises that your ears assail,
And clamorous thus they over all prevail.
These out of doors ;—while courtiers caress'd
The king within, and all his doings bless'd.
' May Solomon long live !' they fawning said,
' Nor ills nor wars his peaceful land invade ;
And may the Lord exalt his honour'd name
Above the greatness of his father's fame ;
That loud his wisdom and his worth may sound,
And far be blazon'd in the lands around !'
To which the king, upon his sickly bed,
In full accordance bow'd his aged head ;
And then the silence, which was short, he broke,
And thus in rapture and thanksgiving spoke :

‘Blest be the God of Israel, whom I
For all his mercies praise and magnify,
Who at the last has given mine eyes to see
A fix’d successor on the throne to me.’”

This news like thunder on th’ assembly broke,
And now afresh their trembling fears awoke :
Nor feast, nor wine, nor music now employ,
But dash’d to silence is their jovial joy ;
Their only thought, to crown the blithesome day,
Is speed, in safety to decamp away,
While well portray’d in every wine-flush’d face,
Glow’s disappointment, flutter, and disgrace.
All now is requisition !—near or far—
The ass—the mule—the camel, and the car ;
While the pedestrians fellow-feel the smart,
Snatch up their staves, and soon equipt, depart,
Each for themselves, to east, to north, to west,
To seek their homes, or some abode of rest.

Deserted thus, near to the latest man,
Through their blank chief a chill of horror ran,
For e’en fierce Joab, who could much defy,
Resign’d his courage, and was glad to fly ;
Whilst Adonijah, head of all the strife,
Was near to forfeit his unguarded life ;
For as their leader, he at once became
The butt of censure, and the sport of shame.
E’en those who in the morning of that day
Could praise him, and all adulation pay,

Ere the sun set could cast the taunting smile,
Condemn his rashness, and his cause revile.
Weak minds ! which judge not of the genuine
deed,
But praise or censure as the views succeed.

The disappointed prince now shifts to save
His very life from an untimely grave ;
Hence to the holy altar quick he speeds,
To gain protection, and lament his deeds.
He clasps its horns, as safeguard, till he may
For life and pardon of his brother pray ;
When some of soft commiserating heart
To Solomon his deep distress impart,
And bear his humble and submissive prayer,
That he would pity and in mercy spare :
Nor intercession is preferr'd in vain,
For they the grant of their petition gain.
The new-made king, though flush'd with full
— success,
Seem'd not vindictive when he saw distress ;
For thus he answers, with all mildness due :
“ His crimes I censure—but I pity too.
Go tell him then, that if in future life
He keep aloof from treason and from strife,
And worthy of regard, he shall not see
Revenge retorted for the past from me ;
But if in him I shall vile deeds descry,
The sword shall smite and he assuredly die.

Go then, and from the altar take him down,
That he, submissive, may have mercy shown."

Glad of success on such a kind release,
Quick news is borne of pardon and of peace :
When joyously received, the trembling man
In haste from bondage to his brother ran.
Arrived ;—the throne he now approaches near,
Bowing and cringing, mix'd with joy and fear ;
Glad thus the footstool of that throne to gain,
Where he had plann'd before this time to reign.
Thus oft ambition from its height is hurl'd,
And meets its measure in the present world.

Gravely the prince received the homage paid,
And with the pardon very little said ;
But that was granted, and with the release,
" Go to thy house," he says, " and live in peace."

Now Solomon by further prudence strove
His jarring subjects to unite in love ;
When all he pardon'd ;—then the faction closed,
And none the station he had gain'd opposed ;
But all submissive, bow'd to his command,
As co-rex-ruler o'er the peaceful land,
With cheerful grant, when David should be gone
To reign sole sovereign on th' imperial throne.

To David now we turn again the page,
Declining fast with thought, with toil, and age :

He saw his end by gradual progress come,
Which soon would call him to his final home ;
He then resolved to do what was on hand,
While yet his mind was sound, and at command ;
When, firm to duty, he convokes from far,
His princes, elders, and his men of war,
A vast assembly from the nation round,
In wisdom, zeal, and pious deeds profound.
These to the city drawn, due reverence bear,
And with his several sons, august appear.

Solemn the scene ! around they waiting stand
Prepared to hear their sovereign's last command.
Silence profound prefaced the weighty cause,
When from his seat the king in reverence rose,
And in his rising seem'd to cast an awe,
Which feelings only teach the heart to know.
Grave were his looks, where majesty appear'd ;—
Hoary his head—and silver-white his beard ;—
Pallid his cheeks, which once were flush'd with
red,
And palsy tremors shook his feeble head.
Mute all beheld him with a troubled mind,
Such striking changes in his frame to find,
As plainly told them a short time would bring
A final parting with their favourite king.

He stood and paused :—at length he silence
broke,
And to his subjects thus endearing spoke :

“Brethren and people!—gladly now I see
Your great attention to the state and me,
So manifested in a general way,
By your attendance on this solemn day ;
Then lend an ear, while I my heart unfold,
Nor on your parts a sentiment withhold.
Long has it been my wish, if I might choose,
To build a temple for religious use,
Wherein the sacred ark might ever stand
An honour’d treasure of our favour’d land,
An edifice meet for Divine abode,
Or for the footstool of Almighty God ;
But while I live, it is denied to me
The favourite work that I had craved to see.
The Lord withheld my great design to raise
The sacred walls—the monument of praise :
For He pronounced mine was a life of war,
Which should the service in my time debar ;
Yet not its close, for sanguine times should cease,
And hands erect it in the days of peace.

But let me now my memory back recall
To trace my footsteps to the throne of Saul,
With thanks to God, who fix’d his choice on me,
And raised his servant from a low degree,
E’en from the sheep-cot in the rural field,
Successful weapons for the realm to wield ;
And first of Judah’s house, select to stand,
The ruling sovereign o’er his favoured land.

He ever since, in all conflicting strife,
Has been my fortress and defence in life.
Nor cease his favours yet ;—for now my son
He has adopted to possess the throne ;
E'en Solomon decreed chief magistrate,
To fill my place, and guide the reins of state ;
And has been pleased to say :—‘ Thy son,
Whom I advance to sit upon thy throne,
Shall, in his peaceful and his better days,
The noble structure for my glory raise,
Who in the future shall, as now begun,
Possess my favour, and become my son ;
To whom I will a tender father prove,
Nor spare my blessings, nor withhold my love,
If, as at present, he will still maintain
A strict allegiance through his future reign,
My judgments execute, in all sincere,
And walk in reverence and with holy fear.’ ”

This said ;—he turn'd to Solomon his speech,
And, thus with beaming love, essay'd to teach ;
“ Know thou, O Solomon ! thy father's God,
To lead thee safely on thy future road :
In all thy doings act a faithful part
To serve with willing mind and perfect heart ;
For He in all is an omniscient Lord,
Proves each intent ; and He will be adored.
If thou shouldst seek Him, He will ever be
A present help, and ever found of thee ;

Bat if forsaken, and thy mind should stray,
He will for ever cast thee far away :
Then take good heed, a father's counsel hear ;
Merit his favour, and his name revere. .
E'en gratitude demands on favours shown
For thee to build the house, and wear the crown :
Then be courageous ;—suffer no dismay ;—
Be strong to act—nor subject to delay ;
'Till thou art able the great work to raise,
To stand through ages to exalt his praise,
And that the favours long conferr'd on me
May be continued, as deserved, on thee."

Thus having shown a father's pious zeal,
And his best wishes for his country's weal,
E'en when no more his corporal eye will cast
A look behind at what may bless or blast ;
He now delivers patterns to his son
Of the great work in future to be done,
Designs of altars, halls, of courts, of wings,
Beyond the grandeur and the grasp of kings,
Which by the Spirit to the king were given,
Not man's invention, but the act of heaven.
With this deposit, he recounted o'er,
And gave in charge, his long collected store,
His vast materials, at unknown expense,
To build this house of such magnificence.
Nor can he now withheld his charge again
T' enforce the glory of his future reign,

And urge this heart-felt work without delay,
Without intrusive fears, and weak dismay,
When heaven and earth would lend their aid to
raise

The grand memorial of the nation's praise :
"Fear not, my son," he says again, "to stand
In this the foremost;—and with zeal command ;
For in the work the Lord will prosper thee,
Thy great director and thy guide will be.
O'er sacred things the Levites will preside,
Assist thy labours, and in need provide :
Counsel will freely flow from every spring,
From thine own princes, and each minor king ;
While cunning men, versed in each curious art,
Will all their genius to thy aid impart."

Thus having charged his son, seal'd with his
tears,

David now turns to those of riper years,
His princes, nobles, prophets, priest and sage,
Men great in wisdom and confirm'd by age :
"You know," says he, "that Solomon my son
Is call'd in youth to occupy the throne ;
His years are few, and his experience small,
To take upon him thus the charge of all ;
Then let his cares your sympathy engage,
To lend the wisdom of experienced age,
For unto you I look, with hope to find
A prompt assistance by a willing mind :

And first, and chief, to this great work I call,
That must in measure on your shoulders fall.
Grudge not the time you may therein afford ;
'Tis not for man, but for our gracious Lord—
A temple that shall every eye engage,
Renown'd through nations, and through every
age.

The work is great, but you behold and see
The preparations that are made by me ;
For with all care I have, for years unknown,
Collected silver, diamonds, gold, and stone ;
The stateliest cedars Lebanon could boast,
With all the treasures of each copious coast ;
Their sapphires—marbles—all they could impart,
And men well skill'd in every work of art,
To build, embellish, beautify, emblaze,
A work surpassing all preceding days.

Such are prepared, ere I must bid adieu ;—
The rest I leave unto my son and you ;
Nor let me doubt, that when my time is done,
You will complete what I have thus begun :
For all these treasures you behold of mine,
Tell my adherence to the great design,
Nor claim I less of you who may survive ;
Then keep this zeal and energy alive,
To raise a work that may through ages stand
A praise and blessing to our happy land.
Then may you now of liberal minds afford
United treasures to be jointly stored,

And give mine eyes the pleasing pledge to view,
Of what in future will be done by you ;
What I may look for when this mortal frame
Shall be dissolved, and only leave its name ;
For what more grateful than in faith to see
That this good project will not die with me ?”

This spoke with fervent zeal, and reverent awe,
From breast to breast it made the current flow,
When by the precept and example given,
Their hearts were open'd, and their hands to
heaven.

They then contribute to increase the store
In an abundance never known before ;
Gold, precious stones, in overflowing mass,
Pearls, diamonds, iron, and refulgent brass ;
E'en these so largely and so free they gave,
That David could not an addition crave ;
Whilst in the flow of such unequal'd zeal,
They all united joy and gladness feel.

David o'ercome, no longer could forbear,
But thus broke forth in ' thanks, in praise, and
prayer :

“ O ever blest ! Thou God of matchless might,
Father of Israel, high enthroned in light !
With Thee is greatness, majesty, and power,
Which we in reverence and in dust adore.
All, all is thine ;—what heaven contains, or earth ;
Glories above, and treasures here beneath ;

Thine are all kingdoms ; Thou art Lord o'er all,
Before whom angels and the nations fall :
Riches and honour—high and low degree,
Are in thy hands, and all belong to Thee ;
For by thy fiat Thou canst all defeat,
Exalt the humble, and debase the great :
Then teach us, Lord, to be what we should be,
And know no glory but in love of Thee ;
That so we may in fervent ardour raise
Our grateful thanks, and celebrate thy praise.

But what am I, and what my people here
Who claim my thanks, and seem so very near,
That we should thus be able, and so free,
To give our tribute unreserved to Thee ?
But why should we withhold ?—we only give
Thine own again, which we from Thee receive :
To Thee 'tis due, nor shall we make it less,
If in thy goodness thou art pleased to bless ;
For all is in thy hand, thy sovereign power,
To blast our blessings, or increase our store ;
For what indeed were our forefathers here,
Or we their sons, without Thou hadst been near ?
Sojourners—strangers—of a low degree ;
Without all succour—but a friend in Thee,
Who hast been pleased to raise us from below
To a great people, higher things to know.
But yet, alas ! no room for man to boast ;
Time passes on, and sweeps away its host,

For like a shadow are our days on earth,
No fix'd abiding from the stroke of death.
Then, gracious God, teach us to know thy fear,
And stand prepared to quit terrestrials here,
With mental eye the world aright to see,
And fix our comforts, all our hope, on Thee.

“ I know, O Lord ! Thou triest the inward part,
And tak'st thy pleasure in an upright heart ;
Then be Thou pleased our tribute to approve ;
It comes sincere ; an upright pledge of love.
In my integrity I've done my part
From the effusions of a zealous heart ;
And glad I am, this happy day, to find
Thus in my people such a willing mind,
As with like zeal their treasures to disclose,
To aid unsparing thy exalted cause.
O ! may'st Thou then, whom our forefathers knew
In all their straits to guide them safely through,
Be with this people in their future way,
To hold th' impressions of the present day ;
That in their retrospects it may be view'd,
Often remember'd, and this zeal renew'd,
That in their lives they may no safety see,
But as they honour and depend on Thee !

“ And, O ! be Thou with Solomon my son,
To qualify him for th' important throne :
Warm him with zeal this noble house to raise,
To be thy footstool, and advance thy praise :

Grant him a perfect and an humble heart,
That may its influence all around impart.
Teach him to rule with equitable sway,
Thy statutes hold, and make the tribes obey ;
Thy testimony bear, and ready stand
In all to govern at thy high command ;
That in his reign he may extend thy fame,
Draw down thy love, and glorify thy Name."

Thus breathed the fervent king, and as he spoke,
It touch'd the audience, and their zeal awoke ;
His reverential looks, and words inspired, -
With holy ardour every bosom fired,
And raised their thoughts above terrestrial things,
In adoration of the King of kings ;
When simultaneous praise and fervent prayer
Burst from the crowd, and murmur'd through
the air,
Which cordial welcome met on David's part,
And fill'd with comfort his surcharged heart ;
To make him augur in belief again,
That his injunctions would not be in vain.

Thus in a mutual zeal time pass'd away,
And evening hours closed on the solemn day ;
When each, with heart-felt joy supremely blest,
Retired from labours to the couch of rest.

Nocturnal slumbers past ;—once more again
The morning blush'd along the dewy plain,

When with the rosy light, prompt to the came,
The ardent people and the king arose,
Quick to renew the duties of the day ;
Nor had their slumbers swept their zeal away.

To life and action roused, the crowds unite
In preparation for each solemn rite.
A thousand bullocks now at once are slain,
And with their blood the sacred altars stain :
The knife cuts off a thousand bleating lambs,
Unshorn and fatlings, and a thousand rams.
These sacrificed, the smoky columns rise,
And meet acceptance towering to the skies.
These holy rites awhile their time employ,
To eat and drink with undivided joy,
While with the banquet of such general fare
They join in symphony of praise and prayer.

Amidst this scene, now Solomen they bring,
With joy anoint a second time their king ;
Where all support him, as one single voice,
Vow their allegiance, and confirm the choice ;
In which his brethren with full grant accord
To own him sovereign, and their lawful lord.

Thus pass'd another day, wherein they saw
A fix'd successor to dispense the law,
And their king pleased to see a favourite son
Raised by free choice to occupy the throne,

And take the burden of the chief command,
Too hard a task for his enfeebled hand:

Long had the king declined—but now we come
Near to his change for an eternal home.
All skill of man no longer can avail,
And virgin warmth communicated fail:
Life in the socket glimmers to its last ;—
Hopeless to lengthen—wearied with the past.
Thus feeling nature from its work depart,
Desert the pulse, and feebly move the heart,
He clearly saw how near his glass was run,
And hence he call'd, and thus address'd his son ;
While his low languor, voice, and looks appear
To tell beholders that his end is near :
“ I go,” says he, “ the way of life on earth,
In consummation of all things in death ;
Like other mortals all must end to me,
And all I leave—but much in charge to thee ;
Then show thyself a man—move firm along,
Upright in all, and in thy station strong :
In every movement let the nation see,
The Lord thy God has sovereign rule o'er thee.
Fulfil his charges all thy future days ;—
Keep all his statutes ;—walk in all his ways ;
Commandments, judgments, testimonies bear,
In strict example, and in holy fear.
Therein depart not from his sacred law,
Which Moses wrote to guide us here below ;

That thou may'st prosper, though oppose in
strife,

Blest by the Lord in every state in life ;
For He has said to me in times now past,
His favours great should be, and long should last,
To my descendants bless, if they should prove
Of pious conduct, and deserve his love.
Then may thy merits this high promise gain,
And thy sons' sons the glorious right maintain,
That a succession may through ages run
To fill my place, and sit upon my throne."

This said, he added some directions more
On what might fall within his regal power ;
The sword to use where justice made it due,
But where reverse, the grateful mind to shew.

Thus ceased his final charge, when loss of
speech
His tongue disabled of its gift to teach ;
While general failure of the vital powers
But left him some few languid, lingering hours.
These past ;—he shorter drew his parting breath,
Then closed the scene, and sunk serene in death.

Thus to a realm so often risk'd and test,
For ever was a favourite monarch lost ;
Gone from a people left behind to mourn,
To his last mansion, never to return !

Quick on the loss, from Beersheba to Dan,
O'er all the land a gloomy mourning ran ;
E'en Hebrew dames and many a blithsome maid,
Who oft in praise of David's deeds had play'd ;
Now changed their tunes ;—their harps on
willows hung,
And in dull notes their doleful ditties sung.
Deeply all felt it, for though Solomon
Might promise fair to be the father's son,
To catch the mantle from his honour'd sire,
And share a portion of the holy fire ;
Yet he was young, and might excite their fears
For the uncertain turn of future years ;
While they had witness'd, through conflicting
strife,
The even tenour of the father's life,
Who had from early youth their battles fought,
And, oft high-favour'd, their deliverance wrought ;
Had in the heathen work'd an overthrow,
Slain their great hosts, and made the nations bow ;
Pull'd down their idols—their false works
destroy'd,
And pagan groves in better use employ'd,
To let them see, at each successive fall,
That Israel's helper was a God o'er all :
And bringing all their toils at last to cease,
Had left them to enjoy the sweets of peace.
A pleasant rest ;—but yet, alas ! their fear
Anticipated the great chance of war,

When their strong bulwark, this defence, was
gone,
And all the terrors of his mighty throne;
To which the nations round were made to bow,
Sunk into apathy, and kept in awe.
No wonder then that they should feel dismay,
When such a shield at last was snatch'd away,
With dread recurrence to the days of Saul,
When vaunting heathens overawed them all,
And none were favour'd with success to stand
To check their fury, and defend the land.

Such times they thought might then return
again,
And deluge with fresh blood their peaceful
plain,
While their success would worst of ills entail,
To make their worship paramount prevail;
O'erspread the nation with a pagan night,
To the extinction of the Jewish light,
And they at last, as their concluding doom,
Should sink to bondage, and like slaves become.
Heart-rending thoughts! when fears thus dark
unfold,
And faith's firm anchor quits its steady hold,
Which now, to many, brighter prospects shroud,
And o'er the nation spread a sable cloud,
To make their loss in deeper tints appear,
And add a sharpness to the pang severe.

Too strong these bodings might some minds
assail,
And panic-fears without a check prevail ;
Yet in degree, and in that very reign,
Some witness'd this anticipated pain,
For e'en this wise, this favour'd Solomon,
Clouded the lustre of his setting sun,
And many led, in that declining day,
To worship idols, and to fall away ;
But yet so late in life, that most through age,
Ere these times came, had left this mortal stage,
And hence could not, when realized, be pain'd,
Nor see the tarnish, nor the loss sustain'd.

Such their reflections ;—but we now come
near
To the last object of the royal bier.

The funeral came ;—when crowds attend from
far,
On foot, on horse, and in the sable car ;
Each eager now, upon this solemn day,
The last sad tribute of respect to pay.
Arranged in ranks, with solemn pace they move,
While tears and sighs express their loss and love,
In seeing thus the close and final end
Of their deliverer, counsellor, and friend.

Thus he is borne, while all dull silence keep,
With his forefathers in the dust to sleep,

With whom inslaved his cold remains they lay,
 And all due honours to his memory pay,
 E'en backward cast a tear-distilling view,
 And take a lingering and a last adieu !
 Nor spare they rites, religious rites, to prove
 Their sacred duties, and their store of love :
 Which well perform'd, they slowly quit the place
 With thoughts impress'd that time could not
 efface,
 While shades of evening, as they left the tomb,
 Nursed up reflection, and increased the gloom.

Thus then our subject to that state we bring
 Which levels all—the mendicant and king ;
 Where sink as one, the rich—the poor—the brave,
 And monarchs mingle with the saint and slave ;
 Where all distinctions among mortals cease,
 And dust and ashes ever rest in peace.

Here ends the man !—but let each future age
 Read to advantage his historic page :
 Let us who now live in this world of cares,
 Alike surrounded with unnumber'd snares,
 From him learn wisdom ;—in the monarch see
 What mortals are alone—and yet may be :
 How mean—how low—how destitute—how frail,
 When the weak senses o'er the mind prevail :
 To what may fall in the weak tempted hour,
 And yet arise to by Almighty power !

A wonder—man !—a worm of dust or earth,
Of frail materials, and a prey to death ;
Yet on this globe placed by th' Omnific Word,
O'er all creation its directing lord,
And blest with here, e'en in this low degree,
A spark emitted from the Deity ;
An emanation on the precious mind,
That links the human to th' angelic kind.
How dignified thy state !—then bow and prove
A due return in reverence and love ;
For of all creatures man alone can raise,
From conscious knowledge, gratitude and praise ;
And David here as an example shone,
Which gave him access to the Father's throne,
Where at the footstool he was wont t' impart
The warm effusions of a fervent heart ;
Who in the general, through each change he
knew,
Kept the main object of this life in view.
Whether a shepherd in an humble bower,
Or ruling monarch in despotic power,
He was the same :—with steady sight he saw
All things inferior in this earth below,
And his clear views, in faith and hope, uncurl'd
A brighter prospect in a better world.

Few—few indeed, the elevation gain
As kings and princes o'er the land to reign ;
Yet greater work than this all have to do ;—
A mental war to wage, and heaven pursue ;

To be preparing for the silent grave ;
For every mortal has a soul to save !

What dross all riches, power, and honours are
When with eternals we their worth compare !
A passing moment—a contracted span,
Bounds the possessions of dependent man ;
He cannot count upon another day,
For ere it comes he may be snatch'd away ;
Or if extended to a length of years,
The time, when past, a transient space appears ;
And then it must be changed for scenes to come
Of endless durance—an eternal home !

Then over all be this our chiefest care,
To fill our stations, and for death prepare ;
That when, like his, our final close shall come,
We may be fitted for a happy home ;
Know the best Refuge, when so near the end,
To be our portion, mighty God, and Friend ;
Know earth's attractions blotted out of view,
And calmly bid created things adieu ;
Passing from objects of terrestrial sight
To dwell in glory in the realms of light,
Where saints and angels in sweet union rest,
For ever—ever—and for ever blest.

THE END.

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